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ABSTRACT

This paper presents proceedings from a 2001 working conference of the State and District Support to Low-Performing Schools initiative, which presented research-based strategies and exemplary practice to improve low-performing schools. The presentations focused on state and district systems of support to low-performing schools; use of data to support reform efforts (e.g., data retreats, data-based decision making, using data with parents, and data-driven improvement in learning and achievement); teacher quality, recruitment, and retention in low-performing districts/schools (e.g., school-university partnerships to prepare outstanding responsive teachers, special education approaches to improving professional development in literacy, and six essentials of whole school improvement); interagency collaboration in support of achievement of students in low-performing schools (e.g., a public-private partnership in South Carolina, Title I and IDEA collaboration, and health and human services collaboration); and literacy development approaches (e.g., talent development model, early literacy development for English language learners, and primary literacy standards). Two appendices present the meeting agenda and speaker biographies. (SM)

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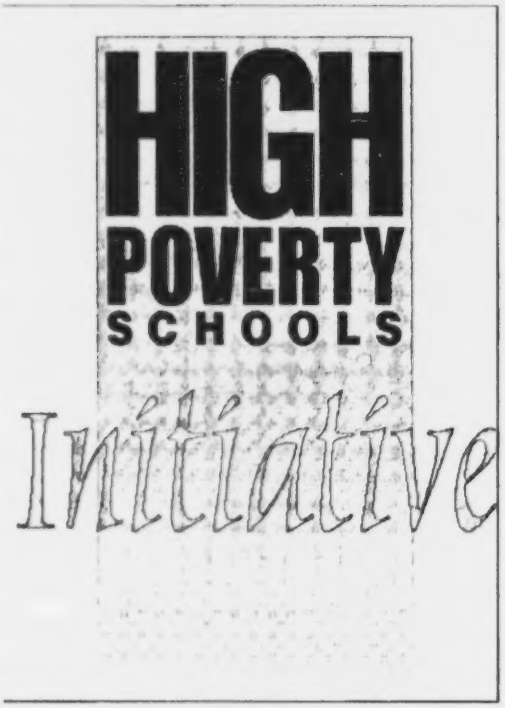
Selected Presentations from
A Working Conference of the High Poverty Schools Initiative



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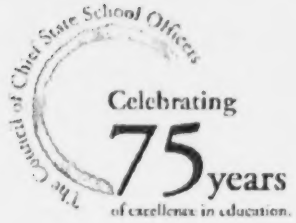

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We are especially grateful to the conference speakers whose presentations are included in this document. Their knowledge, experience, and insights were of great value to those who attended the conference in Baltimore and should prove useful to those who read these proceedings as well. Julia Lara directs the High Poverty Schools Initiative. Burton Taylor, Senior Consultant, and Gitanjali Pande, Project Assistant, prepared and edited this document with the assistance of Kathy Rodgers and Marty Bush.

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Introduction

In 1995 the Council of Chief State School Officer's Resource Center on Educational Equity launched the Initiative to Improve Achievement in High-Poverty Schools. Its purpose is to help state and local education officials build the capacity to implement various federal education programs aimed at improving student outcomes in high-poverty schools, in particular Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). Its overarching goal is to ensure that students in high-poverty schools gain the knowledge and skills necessary for sustained education success. Special attention also is given to English language learners and students with disabilities. Program activities include convening national working conferences and publishing materials designed to assist state and local educators working on school improvement. The Initiative publishes a monthly electronic newsletter, Gaining Ground: Achieving Excellence in High Poverty Schools.

Other projects within CCSSO complement the Initiative's work. They include the Policymaker Partnership Project, the Students with Disabilities in High Poverty Schools Project, the Limited English Proficient Students Assessment Project, and the Extended Learning Initiatives Project.

The Initiative is funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Exxon Education Foundation.

The Initiative's agenda of in-depth, research-based working conferences on key topics is integral to its mission to coordinate education reform efforts among state teams. These teams, comprised of state and local education agency staff, attend the working conferences over a period of several years so that their knowledge base on policy, practice, and research aspects of the topic can be broadened and deepened. The working conferences have focused on substantive issues that include curriculum development, pedagogy, student learning, standards and assessment, school support systems, accountability systems, professional development, comprehensive school reform, early childhood education, parent support and involvement, external/extended student supports, and improving achievement outcomes in the middle grades.

The Initiative also provides state education agency staff with technical assistance, information from the U.S. Department of Education, and other tools that state education agency officials can use to implement the requirements of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), the Reading Excellence Act, Comprehensive School Reform, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and Class Size Reduction funds. In implementing its work, the Initiative builds bridges to other education groups as well as to other Council projects, such as the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards and the Arts Education Project.

The eleventh working conference of the Initiative, *State and District Support to Low-Performing Schools,* was held in Baltimore, Maryland May 20-23, 2001. It was conducted in collaboration with the National Clearinghouse on Comprehensive School Reform and the Policymaker Partnership for Special Education and focused on:

- state and district systems of support to low-performing schools:
- the use of data to support reform efforts:
- teacher quality, recruitment, and retention in low-performing districts/schools;

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- interagency collaboration in support of achievement of students in low-performing schools; and
- literacy development approaches.

An examination of state and district support to low-performing schools is timely as state and local education officials intensify their efforts to improve achievement in these schools. Title I of the 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA specified a framework for state action to improve low-performing schools. While states have always had the legal obligation to support schools, the 1994 language required a shift from the role of monitoring compliance to providing assistance to schools and districts. As of early fall 2001, it appears that the new reauthorization of the ESEA will increase these responsibilities and provide more specificity as to how they should be accomplished.

The conference afforded state and district education officials, technical assistance providers, and others an opportunity to learn from leading researchers and practitioners about research-based strategies and exemplary practices to improve low-performing schools. Moreover, they were able to exchange knowledge and experiences with colleagues from their own states and a larger national network of peers.

The conference was comprised of plenary presentations, concurrent sessions, state team working meetings, and school site visits. The latter two activities are especially important to the effectiveness of these conferences. The state team sessions provide team members with an opportunity to discuss how they can apply the ideas and models presented during the conference and plan follow-up activities. School site visits give state and local officials an opportunity to see how local practitioners have made significant improvements in high-poverty schools. (A copy of the conference agenda is included as Appendix A and Appendix B contains the presenters' biographies.)

The following sections of this document summarize the observations and recommendations provided during the plenary sessions along with specific approaches to implement them as discussed during concurrent sessions. There is a separate section for each of the five topics listed above.

I. State And District Support to Low-Performing Schools

The first plenary session focused on *What Works in Low-Performing Schools.* The session was intended to provide the contextual backup for the succeeding plenary and workshop presentations. Three individuals made presentations: Warren Simmons, Executive Director of the Annenberg Institute on School Reform; Amanda Datnow, Assistant Professor of Theory and Policy in Education at the University of Toronto; and Michael Williamson, former Deputy Superintendent of the Michigan Department of Education.

WARREN SIMMONS

Simmons based his remarks on his work with high-poverty schools in Philadelphia and the 18 Annenberg Challenge Communities as well as drawing on the work of others. In his view, school staff are struggling to understand the significance of new standards, high stakes accountability assessments and the relationship between them. Also, there are other school reform initiatives such as school-to-work, service learning, small schools and small learning communities within schools, family-community supports and involvement, school-based management, and comprehensive school designs. School staff often do not understand the relationship between these initiatives and may view them as competing demands on their time. A major task for state and district education agencies is to help school staff see these initiatives in positive terms and as integrated, rather than separate, projects.

Successful reform requires changes in beliefs and values. Underlying the standards movement is a shift from a belief that ability controls learning to a belief that effort is the key factor. There is a need to reconcile varying belief systems and values and relate them to practices. In addition, principals need to shift from being administrative leaders to instructional leaders. This is a significant challenge for many because they have not been trained to perform this role.

Loosely coupled versus nested organizations – In the past, schools and teachers were free to engage in their own approaches to teaching. The standards movement requires schools to align themselves with each other and teachers to work together and share practices. This shift requires a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of school, district, and state officials. Change needs to occur not only at the school level, but at all levels in an aligned fashion.

The school reform process should begin with a self-study that examines the current status of the school as measured against standards of practice. This process should be extended to an evaluation of district practices to see if they support what the school should be achieving. District and state practices and oversight need to support school reform. This often is not the case.

Simmons went on to identify additional elements of effective school reform efforts as follows:

- Using data in a way that is solution oriented rather than blame oriented. (Use data in conjunction with feedback loops to change policies and practices.)
- Developing a set of well-specified standards.

- Aligning standards with research-based curricula, materials, and instructional methods. (School, district, and state standards should be aligned.)
- Translating standards into behaviors and practices. (This requires that tools be developed to operationalize what those standards mean, and to help teachers develop ways to analyze student work, e.g., curriculum frameworks.)
- Developing common expectations. (This results from common standards, discussion, collection, and evaluation of data.)
- Changing classroom management in light of changed instructional practices.
- Providing appropriate supports for students.
- Conducting frequent assessments.
- Providing sustained professional development and technical assistance. (There must be opportunities for continuous learning.)
- Aligning change at the school, district, and state levels. (They should share the same mission and goals.)
- Attending to the technical core, e.g., curriculum, instruction, materials, fiscal management, as well as the communal organization of the school. (It is not sufficient to bring teachers together to share practices.)
- Customizing reform models to deal with the strengths and weaknesses of each school. (Districts and states need to relate to each school differently within a common set of parameters.)
- Taking action to reduce district and school "churn" – high rates of turnover in low-performing schools by teachers, administrators, and students.
- Building a community of teachers, administrators, and learners. (This requires interventions at the school, district, and community levels.)
- Maintaining ongoing feedback. (Need to build study groups in the school and connect them to networks outside of the school, including community and state-level parties.)
- Engaging in collective problem solving at the school and district levels. (This requires a collective framework and an infrastructure to support ongoing conversations about standards and data. They must go beyond process to address content issues.)

AMANDA DATNOW

Amanda Datnow has been engaged in studies of some of the most widely used, externally developed comprehensive school reform models over the past six years. She has based her research on interviews and classroom observations, while her colleagues have been looking at student achievement data. Datnow addressed the following questions:

- Why do some schools sustain reforms while others do not?
- What does it take to sustain comprehensive school reform at the school, district, and state levels?

Her major findings are

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- For reform to be a worthwhile endeavor, it needs to focus on teaching and learning. Change must occur in what goes on in the classroom.
- Reforms need to be implemented over a period of several years in order to have an impact. Level of implementation is a significant predictor of student achievement gains.
- There are advantages to whole school reform efforts as compared to partial school reform efforts.
- Sustaining school reform is not just a school-level enterprise. State, district, and school representatives, as well as members of external design teams, all play a role in determining the outcome of reform efforts. States, districts, and design teams need to change along with the schools that are expected to reform.

She went on to make suggestions to implement and sustain school reform:

1. Understand and support reform as a process that is long term, continuous, and comprehensive. Quick fixes are not long lasting.
2. Provide support for schools to invest time and deliberate thought in the initial selection of reforms. Staff buy-in and data analysis are critically important and take time.
3. States and districts need to provide support for reform, but be cautious about mandates and inducements. Reliance on inducements often results in an end to the reform when the inducement ends. Capacity building is needed for the long term.
4. Choose reforms that can accommodate changing district and state policies. When a school reform conflicts with a district or state requirement, requirements usually prevail. Those reforms that last are ones that support meeting state and local requirements.
5. Ensure a stable resource base and infrastructure to sustain reforms. Ensure, to the extent possible, that sufficient funds will be available to implement the reform as part of the planning phase.
6. Make sure that equity is an explicit goal of reform efforts and provide conditions that allow it to be achieved. Values and cultural beliefs need to be confronted as part of the process. Evaluation criteria should include whether achievement gaps among groups are being closed.
7. Facilitate conditions for design teams, schools, and districts to work together in successfully adapting reforms for multicultural, multilingual contexts. Most of the nationally disseminated reform designs were not developed specifically for very diverse populations, but they can be adapted to support schooling for different populations, particularly for English language learners.
8. Place a high priority on building teacher ownership for the reform. Teachers need to understand the reform and commit to the theory behind it. Some level of local adaptation is probably necessary.
9. Plan for changes in belief systems in addition to changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and school organization. Educators' ideologies influence how they implement reforms.
10. Broaden measures of reform success to go beyond improvement on test scores, e.g., understanding the value of learning, engaging in critical thinking, increased equity, creation of a school culture that fosters continual improvement.
11. To sustain reform, a strong effort is required on the part of multiple actors.

MICHAEL WILLIAMSON

Michael Williamson provided a view of what is needed to help low-performing schools succeed from a state education agency perspective. According to Williamson, having the right focus is essential: *It really is about kids.* At the state department level, it is easy to think about processes, programs, regulations, and legislation. But the whole issue is kids – kids learning and teachers teaching. State education agencies (SEAs) should place a greater focus on technical assistance – helping schools get things right -- and a lesser one on regulation and finding what is wrong.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is reconceptualizing its technical assistance program. Traditionally, most technical assistance has been in the form of training. Training is used to solve knowledge-based problems. But performance problems typically are not solved by training. Most performance problems are caused by skill deficits that are solved by coaching. More coaching and less training is needed in schools. MDE's main focus is thus on in-depth capacity building.

There is a difference between change and reform: Change comes from the outside, but reform needs to occur from the inside. Training is an "outside in" process. Capacity building is an "inside out" process. To effectively address the schools that fail to serve large numbers of our children, we need to move to "inside out" processes. At the same time, we need to provide knowledge to enable people to change.

SEAs need to think about distributions rather than averages. Looking at averages, there has been great progress in American education over the past 20 years. But as averages have improved, the variance of the distributions has expanded. The Michigan Department of Education provides a range of services designed to move the entire distribution to a higher level. But it also provides technical assistance for low-performing schools with a goal of narrowing the distribution. It considers which services are moving the entire distribution forward and which services are narrowing the distribution.

Over a 10-year period, Michigan has narrowed the distribution of fourth grade math performance significantly. This is much more significant than the change in the averages. A significant percentage of low-performing kids are in schools with high enrollments of reduced or free lunch students. But a significant number of these schools are at the high end of the distribution. This information tells us that, although there is a number of schools that are not effectively teaching children in poverty, there is a large number of schools that are. This demonstrates that the problem is not with the children or their families; rather, it is in the schools. And action can be taken to address this. There is a similar situation in schools that serve 50 percent or more African American students.

Effective schools—those achieving high test scores with high percentages of low-income and African American students—have:

- A clear school mission
- High expectations for success
- Instructional leadership
- Frequent monitoring of progress
- Time on task
- Safe, orderly environments

- Home-school relations

State departments of education can make more schools effective by

- Having clear standards
- Holding high expectations for success
- Exercising state-level leadership that focuses on children and the need for achievement by all children
- Being open to risk
- Using data to measure progress
- Supporting systems that extend time on task
- Providing consistent communication throughout the community about the importance of achievement in a core curriculum
- Why reform doesn't happen:
- Not believing all children can learn. Leaders need to talk about this in ways that convince educators and community members that all children can learn at high levels and commit to act on this belief.
- Not being honest about failure. We are not ready to admit that failure exists in our system. This admission is a prerequisite to reform, followed by a commitment to change.
- Not eliminating excuses. It is not the neighborhood, family, mobility, or race; those are challenges.
- Not extending opportunity – teaching children less and then blaming them for not catching up. After- and before-school programs, summer school programs, and early childhood programs are needed to address failure.
- Not changing culture. Schools must have an organic life. They should be made up of people who talk and work together. Walls between individual classrooms must come down.

State departments of education need to help each school to become better so that every child does in fact learn.

This plenary session was followed by six concurrent presentations. Three addressed state actions to support low-performing schools and another three focused on the role of districts.

KENTUCKY

Johnnie Grissom and Tom Peterson, both associate commissioners of education in Kentucky, described their state's use of consolidated planning, statewide support teams, the state accountability system, and school scholastic audits to bolster low-performing schools.

The objective of Kentucky's consolidated plan is to devise a strategy that includes all relevant stakeholders in the planning of an educational program within a school or school district. The plan provides a defined method of comprehensive school planning and facilitates the coordination of planning across schools. Each school is encouraged to develop a long-range plan focused on aligning resources to improve teaching and student performance. Low-performing schools are required to follow a school improvement plan developed from the scholastic audit. School districts are required to submit a funding application every two years. These plans are used to identify school and student needs, and the funds needed to meet them. Low-performing school districts must revise their consolidated plan in ways that will have the greatest likelihood of improving the Title I schools that are performing below standards in their district. (All program funds are accessed through a Consolidated Plan and Funding Application.) They also meet federal Title I requirements for school improvement plans.

Statewide support teams provide a system of ongoing assistance for Title I schools identified for improvement and for Title I schools implementing schoolwide programs in order to increase the opportunity for students in these schools to meet and/or exceed state standards. (Low-performing schools are identified based on results from the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System.) State teams in Kentucky are composed of state-level Title I program consultants, regional Title I accelerated learning consultants, and content area specialists. State-level staff are assigned to specific districts and provide support with schoolwide programs and targeted assistance to those schools identified as low performing or in need of improvement. Regional staff--local educators who are "on loan" to the state for a maximum period of three years--have similar duties to state staff but are responsible for an entire region. Content area specialists are regionally based staff who partner with schools to provide instructional support in specific content areas.

Teams comprised of a "highly skilled educator," a parent, a teacher, a school-level administrator, a district-level administrator, and a university faculty member conduct school audits of low-performing schools. These schools are evaluated on the basis of their academic performance, learning environment, and efficiency. The goal of this five-day process is to develop a school profile, which ultimately is given to the school to enable it to initiate an effective school reform process. The lowest performing schools in Kentucky are required to participate in these audits. (Highly skilled educators are paid up to $90,000 annually and are assigned to a particular school, undergo a rigorous selection and training process, and work with school principals and teachers around the issues that emerge from the school report and consolidated plan.)

School reform efforts in Kentucky are supported, in part, by the Commonwealth School Improvement Fund, created by state statute to assist low-performing schools in pursuing new and innovative strategies to meet the educational needs of their students. It is currently funded at $4 million. These funds are used to assist schools in developing or replicating successful strategies developed in other districts, encourage a cooperative instructional and management approach to specific educational problems, and improve overall school instruction and management. Funds are awarded based on an application that must include a plan for evaluating the impact of

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proposed strategies and activities on improving instructional practice and student performance. Each award is based on approximately $24 per student based on average attendance rates.

State support for professional development also is provided to all low-performing schools at $23 per child based on average daily attendance. Use of 65 percent of these funds is determined by site-based council members. However, the criteria must be driven by student achievement data and what is in the best interests of the children being served .

Family Resource and Youth Services Centers are another important state-funded resource for high-poverty schools. Family Resource Centers serve families with children from birth to age 12 and provide full-time preschool/child care, after-school care, supports for new and expectant parents, support and training for child care providers, parent education and family literacy programs, and health services. Youth Services Centers serve families with children over age 12 and provide referrals to health and social services, employment counseling and training for high school students, assistance in securing summer and part-time jobs, and counseling for drug and alcohol abuse, family crises, and mental health.

All of the initiatives described above should be viewed as elements of a cohesive plan for the Kentucky Department of Education to improve its low-performing schools.

North Carolina

Marvin Pittman, Senior Assistant to the State Superintendent, and Elsie Leak, Director of School Improvement in the North Carolina Department of Education, provided an overview of the state's accountability system, the ABC's of Public Education. The state has moved from a school district report card to a school-by-school accountability system based on growth of student achievement. Each school is expected to show student progress and reach a growth goal set by the state department of education. Local schools are required to meet the standards set by the state but the manner in which they reach their growth goal is not defined by the state, i.e., there is local flexibility. In addition, North Carolina has a student accountability system under which students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 12 are held accountable for performance on grade or better on the state's end-of-grade test, computer skills test, and an exit exam of essential skills. These elements are designed to raise student academic achievement and to close the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between poor and affluent students. The system also provides for incentive awards to certified school employees if their school meets or exceeds the growth goals.

The key element for success of this system is assistance to low-performing schools. This aid is provided by state assistance teams, which are mandatory for the lowest performing schools and voluntary for low-performing at-risk schools. These five-member teams are assigned by the state board of education and provide assistance at the school level every day for one year. The teams are headed by an administrator and include practicing and retired elementary and secondary school educators, college professors, and doctoral candidates. Each member of the team undergoes eight weeks of training. In academic year 2000-2001, there were 14 active teams --11 at the K-8 level and three at the high school level.

Teams meet with the local superintendent and school principal, develop a needs assessment, examine service delivery, and help build capacity. They assist in the design and implementation of the new school plan and continuously assess and adjust that plan throughout the school year in consultation with school staff and the principal. The teams also conduct information sessions with parents. Data indicate that 88 percent of the schools that received assistance from a team for one year improved their academic achievement and were removed from the low-performing list.

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Students are also held accountable for academic progress. Schools provide support and intensive intervention for students who are performing below grade level. If a student fails an end-of-grade or exit exam, he/she is retested one week later. If failure occurs a second time, intensive intervention programs, e.g., summer school, are put into place and the student is retested at the conclusion of the intervention. If the student is still performing below grade level and is in danger of retention, members of a review team including the school principal and one or more teachers from another school review the student's overall work and make a recommendation for promotion or retention. The principal has the final decision on this matter. (Other members of the this team include the student, parents, and administrators.) A personalized education plan is developed for every student performing below grade level whether or not he/she is promoted.

NEVADA

Terry Owens, an Evaluation Consultant, and Jacklyn Moore, a Title I Consultant, both with the Nevada Department of Education, described technical assistance activities, funding, and programs implemented under the Nevada Education Reform Act of 1997 (NERA), particularly with regard to low-performing schools (schools needing improvement) and the relationship of NERA to Title I, especially in the context of coordination of resources.

Under NERA, funds are allocated to low-performing schools based on their designation as "Needing Improvement," the lowest performing category of schools under the state's accountability system. (To be placed in this category, a school must have a student attendance rate of 90 percent or less over a three-year period and have over 40 percent of its students score in the bottom quarter of the Terra Nova Norm-Referenced Test.) In addition, these schools have a structured school improvement plan and an academic probation panel. The improvement process can last up to three years; however, a school may exit if it demonstrates improvement in testing and attendance sufficient to place it in the "Adequate" category or better in the first or second year.

In the first year, the low-performing school develops an improvement plan and receives a variety of support, including remedial funding in the amount of $10,000 to $12,000 and targeted technical assistance from SEA staff. These funds, which are awarded through a grant process, must be used to implement the improvement plan, e.g., for personnel, instructional materials and books, equipment, and training. In addition, the school is monitored by the state for progress over the course of the year through on-site visits.

In the second year, SEA staff develop the school improvement plan in consultation with school administrators, and a state panel (paid by the district) is appointed for each school. The nine panel members are chosen by the state superintendent and usually consist of two parents, one private sector person, one member of the district board of trustees, three educators, and two college professors. The panel investigates why the school continues to be designated as low performing and presents a report at the end of the year. Also, the school is placed on academic probation if it has not shown improvement in the previous year.

The process in year three is similar to year two, except that the panel reviews the school plan and may recommend to the Superintendent that a state administrator be appointed to run the school. In addition, the district must present two progress reports on the school.

During 1997-2001, the school improvement process summarized above resulted in significant improvements among Nevada's low-performing schools. The number of schools classified as Needing Improvement were 23 in 1997/98, 5 in 1998/99, 10 in 1999/2000, and 7 in 2000/2001. In the same years, the number of schools designated as High Achieving were 2, 5, 8, and 12

respectively, while the total number of schools in the state increased about 10 percent. Only five schools have been classified Needing Improvement for more than one year.

The school improvement process is supported by both Title I and NERA resources. Joint technical assistance activities include:

- An accountability and monitoring system in which Title I consultants work with panel members from NERA to monitor school progress
- Development of school improvement plans
- Creation of four Regional Professional Development Programs, which provide training in the development of standards, assessment, instructional strategies, and content learning

Despite its progress in improving educational attainment, Nevada recognizes that additional improvements are needed in its reform efforts. Specifically, there is a need to better coordinate the timing of applications for school improvement funds with the release of state testing program results. Sole reliance on the Terra Nova Norm-Referenced Test for the state's accountability system is problematical. (School rankings for Title I purposes are based on the Terra Nova and on a writing test for Grades 4, 8, and 12.) Also, there is a need to disaggregate test scores by race and ethnicity.

CINCINNATI, OHIO

Kathleen Ware, Associate Superintendent, Cincinnati Public Schools, described what they are doing to support whole school reform in low-performing schools.

Cincinnati is a mid-size urban district with about 4400 students in 75 schools. Its population has decreased in the last 20 years due urban flight to the suburbs and the establishment and expansion of charter schools. Roughly 72 percent of the student population is African American, and 27 percent are White, non-Hispanic. Asian and Latino populations are negligible. Sixty-five percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The city has a strong, well-developed parochial education system.

In one capacity or another Cincinnati has been involved in school reform since the 1990 implementation of high-stakes assessments in Ohio. In 1995 Cincinnati went into partnership with New American Schools (NAS) to focus reform efforts in low-performing schools using comprehensive school reform (CSR) as its approach.

In order to successfully implement CSR, a new mind set is needed. First, CSR is not just another program to implement on top of another fallen-out-of-favor program; it is a new way of looking at change. Second, district-school relationship, school structure, school culture, and school practices have to change. The factory model of schooling is obsolete.

The Cincinnati Public Schools is committed to developing and implementing a standards-based system using the CSR approach, which focuses the organization's efforts and resources in line with the mission statement, "to educate all students to meet or exceed the district's defined academic standards." In addition to adopting this new mission, Cincinnati

- Defined, set, and aligned goals and standards to the mission statement. For example the strategic goals for 1996-2001 are
- All students meet or exceed high academic standards.
- • All schools are safe and orderly learning environments.

- • All employees of Cincinnati Public Schools are focused on satisfying the needs of our students and our customers – parents, taxpayers, and others.
- Defined, set, and aligned assessments to the standards.
- Is holding teacher teams and schools accountable for achievement gains.
- Is reallocating resources.
- Is decentralizing most services.
- Is more intentional in involving parents and community.
- Has redesigned most schools into K-8 and 9-12 structures.

Forty schools in Cincinnati are currently in the process of putting in the structures of a team-based system. This reform will be phased into to all schools determined to be low performing. Specialty schools such as magnet schools that focus on the performing arts, math, science, and technology are exempted from adopting CSR.

Teacher teams are a key element in this system. These teams, which are led by a lead teacher

- Select instructional materials and learning activities
- Track each child's progress and keep parents informed
- Share responsibility for each child's learning
- Purchase the services of support staff
- Are responsible for achievement gains of students from the beginning to the end of the level
- Participate in hiring
- Share successful curriculum and instructional strategies
- Keep students until they meet exit standards for that level

Students

- Are assigned to one team of teachers for an entire level (K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-10)
- Are held responsible for meeting promotion or credit-granting standards before being promoted or receiving credit
- Work with teachers in flexibly arranged teams
- Participate in multiple learning activities
- Are engaged in alternate learning activities if they do not meet standards
- Know where they are in relation to meeting standards

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education has been conducting an evaluation of Cincinnati's school reform efforts. Available results show that

- Teacher teams that produce 3 to10 percent annual improvement in student achievement behavior are co-teaching, observing each other's classes, analyzing student work, and regrouping students after frequent assessments of proficiency.

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- Teachers in team-based schools feel less isolated, report higher collaboration with their peers, and report higher levels of involvement with, and control over, decisions that affect their school and their work, and feel a greater sense of responsibility for the student body and the broader student environment.
- Teams with assigned Standards in Practice coaches had significantly higher levels of instructional focus than teams without these coaches.

CHULA VISTA, CALIFORNIA

Chula Vista, California is the largest K-6 school district in California. Located near the Mexican border, it has a student population of approximately 23,500 that is 62 percent Hispanic, 21 percent White, 7 percent Filipino, 5 percent African American, and 4 percent Asian. It has 37 schools and 2,344 employees.

Libia Gil, Superintendent of Schools in Chula Vista, discussed the role of the superintendent in establishing a districtwide climate to support improvement in all schools, particularly in those schools that are low performing. In addition to initiating community listening forums, the district developed a long-term strategic visioning process that involved representatives from all segments of the community. The basic question of what should students know and be able to do after completing their elementary school years served as the focus to raise learning expectations that resulted in the creation of a shared vision and values for the school district. Subsequently, strategic goals were also adopted.

The process for transforming beliefs to action included a systematic decentralization effort and a shift of focus from serving adults to serving children. Emphasis was placed on teaching, learning, and coaching. *Some new expectations were established:*

- The district office exists solely to serve students and schools, not the reverse.
- Parents, teachers, and principals are in contact with children on a daily basis and are in the best position to influence what happens with children.
- The goals of high standards, high expectations for all students are non-negotiable.
- Strategies to achieve these goals are flexible and may vary depending on the needs of students.
- Principal selection is crucial since they have the key role in transforming a school. (They must demonstrate a passion for student advocacy and learning.)

Throughout this process emphasis has been placed on building partnerships and collaborations to reach consensus.

A new student-based decision-making framework was adopted based on the following considerations:

- How does this decision improve student learning?
- Is the decision illegal, unethical, or immoral?
- Is there adverse impact on others?
- How are individual needs balanced with group needs?

Undergirding these questions is a strong commitment to data-driven decision making. Data gathering is ongoing. Data are gathered, analyzed, and publicized widely throughout the

community. Student assessments are based on multiple measures, not solely on the results of a single high-stakes test. Parents are educated about how to understand data. The superintendent presents data to principals, parents, and other groups regularly with special focus on students performing below expectation level and those making "extraordinary" gains. Performance data drive improvement goals. Various data sets are published and widely circulated. The public use of comparative student performance data is one of the superintendent's major management tools.

In addition, the district has commissioned a polling firm to gather feedback from parents, students, community, and staff members. Major items include opinions about principals' leadership, school effectiveness, and school climate. This information is also shared and made available to the public and is tracked longitudinally. School autonomy has led to the adoption of various comprehensive school reform models including the Edison program, the Comer model, Accelerated Schools Project, Microsociety, charter schools, and various locally designed models.

To date, the Chula Vista Elementary School District continues to demonstrate growth patterns in all measures of student achievement and customer satisfaction on an annual basis.

BRAZOSPORT, TEXAS

Doug Boone, Principal of Brazosport High School in Brazosport, Texas, described the process used in his school, as well as other schools in the Brazosport Independent School District (BISD), to ensure that there is a high-quality teaching and learning environment for all students.

In 1993-1994, Brazosport High School was given an Accredited Warned rating by the Texas Education Agency as a result of poor TAAS scores for all student groups, attendance, and dropout rate. Then District Superintendent Gerald Anderson appointed Doug Boone as principal of Brazosport High School the following year to implement the eight-step reform process described below. The school received a Recognized rating from 1994 through 1999 and an Exemplary rating in 2000 and 2001. This summary is adapted from a similar presentation made at a CCSSO conference in October 2000 and applies to BISD generally.

Located approximately 60 miles south of Houston on the Texas Gulf Coast, the Brazosport Independent School District serves a seven-city community of approximately 100,000 people. The student body consists of approximately 13,500 students, located at 11 elementary, two middle, three intermediate, one alternative, and two high schools, including Brazosport High School. The student population represents the diverse population of seven very different and unique communities. Brazosport High School and eight other campuses educate a large percentage of students living below the federal poverty line. The district's ethnic distribution is 57 percent White, 33 percent Hispanic, 9 percent African American, and 1 percent other. Approximately 37 percent of BISD's students are economically disadvantaged.

BISD provides a quality teaching and learning environment for all learners, reflecting the district's dedication to high expectations, student performance outcomes, a consistent educational philosophy, technological literacy, equity, and fiscal responsibility. The district consistently remains focused on student achievement through a researched-based, standards-approach, Eight-Step Instructional Process, which is summarized below:

1. **Disaggregation of Test Scores** - Each spring the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) results are disaggregated by student group to identify objectives that require improvement. The district's goal is to show continuous improvement year to year in TAAS scores. The data are prepared for each teacher over the summer and delivered to them by the beginning of the school year. Providing teachers with the data in a timely and efficient manner is a critical part of the process.

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2. **Development of Instructional Time Line** - Texas identifies essential learnings for all students. Using this as a base, teachers throughout the district develop a time line for teaching each of these skill areas. Time allocations are based on the needs of the student groups and the weight of the objective. Effective instruction begins by knowing what students need to learn, what teachers need to teach, and how long instruction will take.

3. **Delivery of Instructional Focus** - Using the time line, an instructional focus sheet stating the objective, target areas, instructional dates, and assessment dates is disseminated and followed by each teacher. By looking on the calendar, BISD knows the objective teachers are focusing on and when each will be taught. The district sets the expectation while the teachers determine how to fulfill it.

4. **Assessment** - After each instructional unit has been taught, teachers administer a commercially prepared assessment. Eighty percent of students must master an objective before teachers move on to another target area. Shorter, more frequent, assessments allow teachers to detect and correct problems early. If students do poorly on a particular objective, additional teacher resources are provided, such as an instructional specialist.

5. **Tutorials** - Students who fail an assessment attend small tutorial groups devoted to the re-teaching of non-mastered target areas. Teachers in all grade levels and areas of certification provide tutorial or TAAS remediation activities both during and after school and on Saturdays. Computer lab time is offered. Additionally, vertical and horizontal teams of teachers and other staff members ensure seamless transitions for students moving between grade levels and schools.

6. **Enrichment** - Mastery-level students attend enrichment classes during tutorial time. At the intermediate and high school levels, mastering the basics is a requirement for taking electives. This practice (which parents highly support) has served to motivate students to take their studies seriously and focus on passing the tests.

7. **Maintenance** - Materials are provided for on-going maintenance and re-teaching of objectives. This ensures students retain what they have learned. It also helps teachers quickly spot student needs for additional instruction. Economically disadvantaged students who need a lot of structure and reinforcement have especially benefited from this practice.

8. **Monitoring** - Principals visit classes daily during the instructional focus to monitor progress and drive home the BISD message that learning is the primary purpose of school.

Brazosport Independent School District's 1999-2000 vision is "Exemplary and Beyond." "Exemplary" has a technical definition for purposes of the state's annual accountability rating, but the district's vision goes far beyond this rating to touch every aspect of its operations. District leadership, faculty and staff, business partners, and the entire Brazosport community share this vision of excellence. The vision challenges the district to go beyond normal performance expectations for public education to a level of performance and recognition never before achieved by a school district. Most importantly, it goes beyond excuses for mediocre academic performance based on family background, ethnicity, or economic circumstance.

The district believes all children can learn, given the proper time and resources. This belief gives the district confidence that all students can master the state's academic assessment instrument, the TAAS, with no significant differences in performance between groups. Whether a student is White, Hispanic, African-American, rich, or poor, the district is committed to providing the time and resources for that child to be successful. The district has made great strides toward accomplishing this goal.

Brazosport Independent School District has made a long-standing commitment to quality. The district was first introduced to the quality movement in 1991 through a workshop presented by Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Total Quality Management (TQM) training began in the district for administrators and faculty in 1992-93. Shortly thereafter, the origins of what was to become the district's Eight-Step Instructional Process began to appear at the district's poorest campus. In 1991-92, half of the district campuses had low performance on the TAAS. In keeping with the TQM principle of examining data to find solutions, TAAS results were analyzed to develop an improvement plan. The data revealed that economically disadvantaged children, regardless of ethnicity, were not successful on the state assessment piece.

Teachers who were successful with economically disadvantaged children became the focus of the improvement plan. These teachers were successful because their strategies continually measured each child's learning and they re-taught to ensure that students met the state academic standards. The Eight-Step Instructional Process was developed by a third grade teacher who ensured that she taught and her students mastered the state standards as measured by TAAS. This process was replicated schoolwide on a pilot basis for two years. Due to the significant increase in scores of economically disadvantaged and minority students, the process, or a variation of the process, was replicated in all district schools.

Extensive training was provided to the staff. Training was conducted in learning styles, ways to convey high expectations for all students, instructional focus modeling, interpretation of test data, total quality management, and the effective schools research. There was very little resistance to the process, for teachers were looking for a way to successfully teach all students. There was, however, no focus or plan. The Eight-Step Instructional Process provided the plan. Due to the significant gains in the first year of implementation, there was little or no resistance in year two.

In all things, the district utilizes the "Plan-Do-Check-Act" cycle of continuous improvement. Data are used to plan and implement new or improved programs and processes (or eliminate ineffective ones), and the resulting data are used to assess and accept, modify, or reject. The district believes that quality results in schools come from quality processes, and that the Eight-Step Instructional Process is an example of a quality instructional model that works.

The success of the Eight-Step Instructional Process begins with step one: disaggregating the data. TAAS categories are broken down to grade level, ethnicity, economic status, and an All Students group. Ethnicity is broken into White, Hispanic, and African American subpopulations. Economically disadvantaged students are those students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunches. Areas of student/class strengths and weaknesses are determined for making sound instructional decisions. Those weakest student targets and objectives are taught first and continuously throughout the year.

In complex quality organizations, what gets measured gets done. Needs and priorities for comparative information and data are determined through best practices and quality standards. Information and data are constantly solicited from other educational organizations, best practice literature, Internet resources, educational research results, and evaluations by independent organizations.

The Texas Education Agency provides the main framework for high standards through an Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report. This report provides comparative data that policymakers, district and campus educators, and the public can use to evaluate how well public schools in Texas are performing. From the AEIS data, campus and district performance levels are used to determine district and campus ratings.

Comparative information from the state is used in campus and district planning to stretch targets, set goals, and support overall school performance improvement. The district has found that

sorting out and communicating this data is the key to using the data for improvement. Measurement is regarded as the springboard to improvement and is an essential element in identifying quality opportunities, initiating corrective actions, setting priorities, evaluating progress, and defining targets to improve upon. Proper use of measurement has led to long-term, continual improvement.

Data analysis is conducted each spring when district TAAS results are received. Data are disaggregated by the following student groups: All Students, African American, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, Special Education, and Spanish TAAS results. Data are disaggregated to show strengths and weaknesses by objective for each subject area and by grade level to identify target areas for improvement. The district's goal is to show continuous improvement year-to-year in TAAS scores.

The Eight-Step Instructional Process ensures that all students have the opportunity to master learning objectives. "TAAS Talks" between teachers and students are evaluative conferences about testing strengths and weaknesses. The process is very structured and strictly adhered to. This ensures that quality instruction and learning take place on all campuses and in all BISD classrooms.

In keeping with the TQM continuous improvement philosophy, adjustments have been made on a frequent basis to improve the process. BISD teachers now believe that they can teach all students, all students can learn, and as a result, high expectations are pervasive throughout the district.

The system put in place by Total Quality Management and the Eight-Step Instructional Process has taken the district to an attainable, communicated, and mutually agreed upon focus on student performance. BISD believes and consistently communicates that quality must be defined as achieving established standards and that its standard for all to achieve is *"Exemplary"*.

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

In 1999, when Anthony Amato became Superintendent of the Hartford Public Schools, it was last among the state's 166 school districts in every academic measure. Student dropout rates were 67 percent, 6 points away from the next highest district. The poverty level was 90 percent. Eighty percent of the children in the city were born to unwed mothers, more than twice the rate of any other city in the nation. The adult literacy rate was the lowest in the state. Dr. Amato set out to raise academic achievement in Hartford through a comprehensive reform program. While it is too early in his tenure to see the complete results of his efforts, some significant improvements have occurred. For example, ninth grade dropout rates have decreased 33 percent; the percentage of children classified as disabled has decreased from 16.9 percent to 13.9 percent; and attendance in the first week of school is greater than 90 percent. Key elements of his program and approach that produce this remarkable progress are summarized below.

Systems Approach

First and foremost, an effective program has to be eclectic and must be based on a comprehensive systems approach that involves the entire system. It has to include a number of solutions in order to work. Hartford uses a Balanced Literacy System comprised of 16 criteria or items. Key elements include:

1. Clear goals and standards -- *Every June teachers, staff, and parents in the district rate whether there are clear goals and standards in their system. All parents and teachers should know what the goals are for the year.*

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2. A talent model versus a deficit model -- *Emphasis is placed on what children can do. This approach has a has huge positive effect on all students, especially bilingual students and special education students. It drives all curriculum initiatives.*

3. Daily choice reading – *When is the best time for it? Should it be total choice reading or guided reading? Should it be aligned with the topic of the month or totally open ended? There is a lot of research and evaluation that goes into this subject.*

4. Daily Independent Writing – *Most systems start persuasive essay writing in eighth grade. Hartford starts in kindergarten.*

Progress toward attaining each of the criteria is reviewed in June by teachers and parents. The results of this evaluation determine priorities for the following year.

Hartford looked for a comprehensive reform program that meets most of the 16 criteria. After reviewing a number of programs, they determined that Direct Instruction and Success for All met most, but not all, of their needs. They have to fill in the missing elements to make it comprehensive. The system has to be organic; it must be adjusted every year. For example, 500 Bosnian families were recently relocated to Hartford. This required an adjustment to the comprehensive reading model to better serve them. Every six months to a year the system is tweaked to ensure that the criteria are being met.

Early Childhood - Birth to Pre-K

Because 80 percent of a child's cognitive development will be thoroughly embedded and set by the age of four, early childhood education is critical to the success of any education reform program. To respond to the need to begin the education process early, Hartford created the **R**esidential **E**ducation for **S**tudents using **P**arents as **E**arly **C**hildhood **T**eachers (RESPECT) program. This program uses parents to go into the home with a bonafide curriculum - Born To Learn (from Parent as Partners Curriculum). These parent teachers teach new parents parenting skills. In addition, they ascertain the educational needs of the child and teach the parents how to meet these needs. Parent teachers, who are paid with welfare reform funds, start visiting the family when a baby is six weeks old.

Pre-Kindergarten

Children are exposed to *Success for All* beginning at ages three and four. They do emergent writing (writing their letters, numbers, and their names). They also are introduced to technology. In addition to learning ABCs, they are taught how to use the internet. Training in the Suzuki violin method is available to almost half of all of Hartford's pre-kindergarten students. Foreign language instruction also is offered, specifically Japanese and Italian in some schools. The ability to learn different languages decreases as kids get older. In order to compete globally, these children as adults should be able to speak at least five different languages: three languages operationally (at least 200 words) and two languages fluently.

It is critical that children who will be attending high-poverty schools participate in these and other early development programs.

High School

Reading Interventions – Hartford has adapted a program–Direct Instruction--from Landmark College in Vermont that purposefully looks for students at the college-entry level who cannot read. This program is being implemented at the ninth grade level. Initially, it was not successful because the students were doing comprehension exercises, when what they really needed to

focus on was decoding. (They were actually reading at the third grade level.) They began using Direct Instruction. The ninth grade teachers were against it at first until the students started enjoying it and began to make progress. Direct Instruction is now a sensation in Hartford. Students like it because it is interesting. It involves action and is working like a charm. Several principals have expressed interest in having Direct Instruction follow ninth graders into higher grades. Dr. Amato believes that you cannot write off those students who have reached ninth grade at that abysmal reading level. You have to work on their strengths to bring them up to grade level.

PSAT/SAT – Every 10th grader in Hartford is mandated to take the PSAT, regardless of reading level. It was mandated in 2001 in the face of widespread teacher opposition. The results provide information about student weaknesses, which can be used to help prepare them to take the SAT.

Save Our Seniors (SOS) – The program was due to start in September 2000, but during a meeting in 1999 with high school principals it was determined that it was needed immediately because 35 percent of the Hartford senior class were not going to make it to graduation. Most of the reasons given for the high number of nongraduating seniors had to do with absenteeism and missed detention. Within two months and with a little tinkering around the edges, 23 percent more of the graduates were ready to graduate. Another 10 percent were able to graduate by providing them instruction throughout the summer. The following September, the program commenced on the first day. A comprehensive set of strategies was in place for those students who were in danger of not graduating. Now there is a 98 percent graduation rate.

College For All – Commencing in September 2001, all kids in Hartford will have a college experience before they leave high school. Every senior will leave with either one or more advanced placement courses or will take a college course in the school. It does not matter what they aspire to do in the future; they will leave high school with a minimum of three college credits.

Technology

Currently, there are four computers in every Pre-K class in the district and 500 laptops available to ninth graders. Within the next two years, every family with a child in the Hartford Public Schools will receive a free computer, free connectivity, and free maintenance. Hartford has a 10,000 square foot computer refurbishing center in order to make that happen and is using students to do the work.

Community Full Service Schools

Attending to the full mental, social, and physical needs of all kids is necessary for them to succeed. Hartford's schools are clinics in every sense of the word. They are *seamless* in the sense that teachers who work in the regular daytime program also work after school. These teachers are the *community anchor*. For example, many of the Bosnian and Albanian refugees who were relocated to Hartford had professional careers before relocating. The school system created special programs to enable them to be re-certified in their professional field. In addition, classes are held until 9 p.m. in 11 schools during the week and they also operate until 9 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays to meet the needs of the community.

Parents

Through the Parent Power Institute parents are afforded the opportunity to form their own committees, which then inform the superintendent and others what they would like to have happen in the district. Also, Hartford is sending parents to college. About 350 parents who never

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thought of college for themselves or their children are in four-year degree colleges. Hartford would like to double that number next year. In addition, approximately 4500 adults are attending adult education programs at night.

Data-driven decision making

Principals are using data to identify patterns that they were not looking for or were aware of previously. Tracking students' progress in every teacher's class over the last five years is now the norm. All teachers now have a record of a child's progress available to them.

Public information

Virtually everything Hartford does is public. For example, in the common area of every school, Success for All results are posted for every eight-week assessment as well as how far the school is from its goal. All of this information can be obtained from the district's web site, on radio, television, and in several newsletters.

II. Tools for Leveraging Change

Given the importance of data and data analysis in both the initial phase of school improvement and as a means of continuous evaluation of school transformation efforts, five concurrent sessions were devoted to data-based efforts in school improvement and student achievement each of which is summarized below. They focused on different types of data tools and processes.

DATA RETREATS

Susan Grady, Director, Content and Learning Team, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and Scott Jones, Associate Director, Center for Data Systems and Development, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), provided an understanding of what is involved in a "data retreat" and how it relates to improvements in educational outcomes.

With the assistance of Scott Jones, Susan Grady explained that data retreats are a high-level form of professional development involving a process that leads teams of educators through collaboration and illumination about their school's data. Each data retreat involves an eight-step process:

- Developing the context
- Collecting and organizing the data
- Analyzing data patterns
- Posing hypotheses
- Developing improvement goals
- Designing specific strategies to achieve the goals
- Defining evaluation criteria
- Making a commitment toward achieving continuous school improvement

The primary purpose of a data retreat is to analyze data patterns that form the basis of school improvement plans. This process often concentrates on the importance of analyzing disaggregated data of student populations by ethnicity, gender, and special education, economic, and limited English proficiency status, which then becomes an important part of a school improvement plan. Proper implementation of this process results in a clearly focused school improvement plan developed by school and district staff and other stakeholders that contains strategies to ensure education success for all students.

Ms. Grady then involved the group in a data activity. Participants were divided into teams of two to three individuals and given student data, including proficiency levels by grade, year, and ethnicity. They were asked to examine the data, to represent it graphically in as succinct a way as possible, and to discuss any patterns that emerged from this analysis. Through this exercise, Ms. Grady wanted the participants to gain an understanding of the importance of data for identifying key problem areas in a school, and then develop ways to address them.

The outcome of this activity was that participants had a better understanding of why data retreats are successful in providin g training that is

- Relevant, since educators work with their own data
- Constructive, since educators discover their own understanding
- Collaborative, since educators work as teams
- Reflective, since educators have time to study and find insight into their students' levels of achievement and areas in which they need improvement

Ms. Grady highlighted some common themes or challenges that emerge from data retreats:

- A lack of the ability to visually represent data becomes a stumbling block in trying to identify patterns and solutions for school improvement.
- Educators tend to talk or write in words but seldom represent visually an illustration of what is happening in schools.
- The noise levels rise in these retreats, suggesting higher levels of concentration, participation, and constructive interaction.
- All of the above suggests a great need for data retreats.
- Some school districts lack adequate data on school achievement and proficiency levels. School administrators are encouraged to collect data year-round so that they can analyze school progress as a basis for updating their improvement plans annually.

DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING

Steve Hamilton, Director of District and School Services and Learning Innovations at WestEd, provided an overview of the New England Comprehensive Assistance Center (NECAC) Schoolwide Network initiative and shared information about data-based decision-making tools and strategies found to be useful in supporting school reform efforts.

The focus of the NECAC Schoolwide Network is assisting schools in understanding and implementing schoolwide reform models to support student learning.

The components of the network initiative include

- Principal Leadership Institute, to engage administrators in the school reform process
- Trained facilitators for a three-day congress– held in October–to help school teams develop tasks
- District coaches – continue an ongoing relationship with schools
- Three regional schoolwide network meetings, follow-up to congress
- Additional professional development opportunities

It was found that the Adaptive School Model supports their work and beliefs and that a culture shift in schools is essential for any comprehensive reform effort to take place. There is also the belief that schools need to fully develop vision, values, and goals while understanding systems thinking.

The general outcomes from this initiative include

- Changes in instructional delivery, which include scheduling literacy blocks, staff reassignment, analysis of student outcomes, and assessment reporting procedures

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- Local professional development initiatives that are guided by an analysis of student outcomes
- Adaptation of Comprehensive School Reform Development models and implementation, following a needs-assessment and model analysis
- Increased student achievement outcomes where schoolwide network schools are more likely to meet state standards for adequate yearly progress

Hamilton stressed that in order to make sense of the data, some key questions must be asked:

- What do we know as a result of examining this data?
- What do we think as a result of examining this data?
- What don't we know as a result of examining this data?
- What do we want to know as a result of examining this data?
- How does or will this data help us improve instruction?

Some of the obstacles and challenges identified in implementing the initiative included general feelings of discomfort when using the data, and preexisting assumptions about data use.

Hamilton suggested some important issues to keep in mind when using data. For example, during the decision-making process, school staff should try and be data-directed, not data-consumed. In addition, data may oftentimes create more questions than answers, in which case disaggregation may help to answer some of these questions. There are also multiple ways to examine and measure school data. These include student learning demographics, school processes, and perceptions. Looking at sources of data together to try and make sense of it, and being able to answer key data questions as mentioned above, helps in finding out if a program is working as desired.

Using Data with Parents

Bev Raimondo, Director, Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) of the Prichard Committee, provided information regarding the CIPL initiative to train parents in using and understanding data to increase their capacity to participate in school councils and other facets of educational reform in Kentucky. The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is a 20-year-old independent, citizens advocacy group with a mission of working to improve education for all Kentuckians. The committee provides information and materials to educators, policymakers, and citizens across the state on a variety of student achievement and public school issues. CIPL was created in 1997 in an effort to help parents understand Kentucky's new standards-based system.

Kentucky educational reform efforts set a series of data-driven goals for schools by the year 2014. The primary goal is to achieve proficiency for almost all students in specified academic areas. The reform has also created school-based decision-making (SBDM) councils at each school in 176 districts. Parents are elected members of those councils. Each team builds a consolidated school improvement plan. Since parents in particular are ill prepared to understand and use the data presented to the team, CIPL created a program to train parents in understanding and using data.

The CIPL conducts training on a regional basis for parents and those who work with students. Selection to the institute is by application. The goal is for graduates of their program to be able to

- Provide leadership in parent-school-community partnerships

- Design and implement schoolwide and districtwide processes for reform
- Reach out to historically under-involved parents (including minorities, low-income parents, and fathers) to ultimately improve academic achievement

Academic expectations in the institute are to

- Bring parents and schools together
- Create family friendly schools
- Take action to improve achievement
- Discuss Kentucky's standards-based education system
- Design and implement a project in each participant's school or school district

The training program consists of three two-day sessions conducted over 12 weeks. Parents who attend the Institute receive a combination of information and skills that include;

- Becoming familiar with different learning styles; understanding the Kentucky Education System; becoming more aware of their role as parents in the Kentucky education system; learning about standards and standards-based education; and examining the role of data and data collection in school reform.
- Receiving instruction in leadership skills, in how to reach "hard-to-reach" parents, in planning and holding effective meetings, and in facilitating a parent-teacher dialogue.
- Collaboratively designing a project using the Kentucky Consolidated Plan format used by SBDM councils.

During a period of six months to a year, the parents work on completion of a major project in each participant's own school or school district. The project criteria include improving student achievement, involving more parents, and having a lasting impact. For this period, participants receive a small seed grant for the project.

Evaluation of the program from 1997-2000 showed that 676 parents have been trained, 20 percent of whom were minority and 14 percent were men. A number of graduates have run for school boards. In general, local administrators and principals have been supportive and have often recommended parents for the program. The biggest challenge or lesson learned is that recruiting parents, especially men, is hard in some areas. However, overall the program administrators consider the program to be a successful component of the state's education reform efforts.

DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT IN LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

Joe DiMartino, Director, Student Centered Learning, The Education Alliance, LAB at Brown University, and Patti Smith, Research and Development Specialist, The Education Alliance, LAB at Brown University, discussed how a data and research-based school improvement process focusing on secondary schools was used in 13 high schools in the northeast.

A key objective of this data-driven approach is to use data as a means of creating a more personalized school environment. The overall goal is to help high schools restructure in line with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Breaking Ranks recommendations. The 82 recommendations are grouped into 13 categories and are based on a review of best practices in high school reform. The categories include curriculum, professional

development, school climate and organization, leadership, assessment and accountability, diversity and resources.

Working with the 13 schools, the staff developed tools that generated three different kinds of data sets:

- basic information from the faculty about the school (what they think is important in the school)
- information provided by students that captures their perceptions of school activities
- student performance data .

The data-gathering tool developed is a matrix listing the 82 Breaking Ranks recommendations. There were various steps involved in the data-gathering process:

- School staff and students were asked to rate the recommendations for both the importance of that recommendation being implemented at their school, as well as for the perceived current level of practice.
- The responses were subsequently grouped by categories and aggregated at the school and district level.
- A gap analysis was conducted and used as a means of initiating discussion about where schools are in the school reform sequence relative to where they should be given the principles in Breaking Ranks. For example, faculty were asked to comment on what the survey responses revealed about perceptions in terms of practice and implementation.

The data were used to:

- Assess existing conditions
- Define changes that need to take place in the school
- Set improvement goals
- Assess progress

Finally, the faculty and student perception of readiness to implement reform are tested against a detailed disaggregation of student performance data. Data from both these sources are then used to measure success and assist in reflecting on the impact of the school reform effort.

Increasing Classroom Production, Not Increasing the Budget, Is the Secret to Increasing Student Learning

John Hollingsworth and Philip Hollingsworth, DataWorks Educational Research, provided an overview of two products offered by their firm. DataWorks provides products and services for K-12 school districts throughout California. These include the Productivity Index (DPI), a way of quantifying and analyzing those factors that enhance or detract from student achievement, and the DataWorks Targeted Improvement Model (DTIM).

The DTIM is based on two straightforward principles: (1) there are a multitude of factors that impact student performance; and (2) to enhance the degree of student success, schools should isolate and focus on those factors that are within their control. The model was derived from an examination of more than 50 common factors that impact student performance. After analyzing

each of the factors, DataWorks isolated 12 components that school or school district staff can control.

The DPI and the DTIM are designed to provide information to inform strategic decisions at the classroom, school, and school district levels. Both are designed to systematically gather, analyze, and verify data that expose strengths and weaknesses in the school's instructional program.

Both speakers gave an abbreviated demonstration of the DTIM and DPI processes and models and explained the steps in the processes, the instruments used for data collection and analysis, supporting materials, and the outcomes.

The DTIM uses a five-step process in three phases:

- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Data verification
- Targeted improvement
- Benchmarking and evaluating progress

The DTIM has 12 components:

- Primary: curriculum, instruction, assessment and staff development
- Secondary: learning environment and student support, school's program comparability, resources, and time allocated for student/teacher
- Tertiary: governance and school leadership, professional relations, board policies and district support, and school/community/parent relations

The DPI data collection and analysis activities are designed to addresses the following questions:

- Do teachers use effective teaching strategies/methods to deliver the curriculum?
- Do teachers use effective classroom management strategies to establish an optimum learning environment?
- Do teachers use paraprofessionals efficiently and effectively?
- Do teachers use assessment as both an instructional tool and an indicator of performance?
- Is the work that students attempt and the work that they complete aligned with rigorous grade-level standards?
- Is academic learning time optimized or are there too many interruptions?

The DPI has four components:

- Time on task
- Curriculum alignment
- Curriculum coverage
- Teacher effectiveness

By examining student work, observing teacher productivity, and surveying stakeholders, the DPI provides quantitative information on each component in the model. The results produced provide

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a solid base for decision making. This strategy can be applied to improving outcomes among low-performing schools, high-poverty students, and diverse learners.

III. Teacher Retention, Recruitment, and Development

The second plenary session addressed the importance of high-quality teaching to the education success of students, especially those who are most at risk of school failure. Kati Haycock, Director of The Education Trust, provided an overview of the condition of education in America. She examined the achievement gaps that exist among groups of students, explained reasons why they exist, and provided examples demonstrating that bw-income students and students of color can and do achieve at high levels. Her presentation was followed by several breakout sessions devoted to discussing techniques to improve teaching in general and to better serve high-poverty students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

KATI HAYCOCK

While significant progress was made by African American and Latino students in closing the achievement gap with White students between 1970 and 1988, since then the disparities in achievement have grown or remained the same. African American and Latino 17 year olds do mathematics and read at the same levels as White 13 year olds. Why do such significant gaps remain? How can this condition be justified when evidence exists of high-poverty schools with high concentrations of African American and Latino students excelling and closing the achievement gap?

Too often, children and their families are identified as the reasons for the achievement gap, rather than factors in the school system. The following demonstrate some stark inequalities:

1. We teach different students different things. For example, teachers in high-poverty schools spend less time developing reasoning skills. African American and Latino students are more likely to use computers for drills and practice than their White and Asian counterparts who are more likely to use them for simulations and applications. Low-income, African American, and Latino students are less likely to be enrolled in a college preparatory track.
2. Some students get lower quality instruction. Classes in high-poverty schools are taught more often by underqualified teachers (those who lack a major or minor degree in the field) as compared to more affluent schools. Math and science classes comprised of mostly minority students are taught more often by underqualified teachers.
3. When students have more effective teachers, they show greater gains. When similar students are taught by underqualified teachers in a subject for three consecutive years, their achievement levels are dramatically lower than students taught by qualified teachers during the same time period.
4. There are different and lower standards for some groups. For example, "A" students in high-poverty schools score at the same level on standardized tests as do "C" and "D" students in affluent schools.

There are several factors that contribute to the lack of qualified teachers in the nation's highest poverty schools. Differences in salary and other incentives among and within districts make it

difficult for high-poverty schools to attract, recruit, and retain quality teachers. There is also a system dynamic in which status flows not from the quality of the teaching, but from the status of the students. This serves to further locate the "problem" in the students, rather than focusing on the quality of a teacher's professional skills.

States have responded to the growing gap in student achievement by imposing an accountability system of standards and assessments, but this alone will not provide what students need most—quality teachers. The high-poverty schools that will be most affected by these accountability systems also have the most underqualified teachers, particularly in math and science, and on the middle and high school levels, when stakes are the highest.

To prevent the concentration of underqualified teachers in high-poverty schools, some states have taken direct action. For example, in New York and California, schools identified as low-performing are not permitted to hire any uncertified teachers.

It is also important that teachers are provided with ongoing assistance in changing and improving their practice. Teachers need support that both challenges their beliefs about high-poverty and minority students' ability to achieve at high levels and builds their skill base in the classroom.

Low-income and minority students can meet high standards if they are taught a challenging curriculum by qualified teachers. For example,

- Waitz Elementary School in Texas has a student body that is 99.9 percent Hispanic and 92.7 percent economically disadvantaged. In 1999 its fourth grade scores on the state test, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), were 100 percent in reading and math and 97 percent in writing, while the state average was 89 percent, 88 percent, and 88 percent respectively.
- In El Paso, Texas, from 1992-93 to 1997-98 the percentage of African American students passing the TAAS in math increased from 32.3 percent to 75.1 percent in grades 3, 8, and 10. Comparable figures for Latino students are 36.2 percent to 79.7 percent and 63.1 percent to 91.4 percent for White students. In reading the gains were 57.7 percent to 86.2 percent for African American students, 54.2 percent to 83.5 percent for Latino students, and 81.4 percent to 95.4 percent for White students.
- In New York City, the numbers of African American and Latino students who passed the State Regents test in ninth grade science from 1994 to 1995 increased dramatically: 4496 to 9433 for African Americans and 2209 to 8794 for Latinos. In comparison, the numbers were 4087 to 5878 for White students and 2209 to 3499 for Asian students.
- In Kentucky, six of the top 20 performing elementary schools in reading and math are high-poverty schools, including the first and third ranking schools in reading. Thirteen of the 20 top elementary schools in writing are high-poverty schools.

School-University Partnership to Prepare Outstanding Responsive Teachers: A Best Practice Model for Improving Teacher Quality and Student Achievement in Low-Performing School

John Y. Lee, Director, Urban Teacher Education (UTE) at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), described the School-University Partnership to Prepare Outstanding, Responsive Teachers (SUPPORT) Project. UMBC UTE and Project SUPPORT have been recognized as a state model for improving teacher quality and student achievement by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland State Teacher Education

Council (STEC), among others, for improving student achievement through improving teacher quality in Maryland's lowest performing schools. Based on a belief that teacher quality is a critically important factor in student achievement, UMBC UTE has initiated pre-service and in-service teacher training programs in partnership with high-need schools. Major components of the programs are summarized below.

Improve teacher recruitment by

- Enhancing teacher financial incentives, e.g., tuition reimbursement through use of federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act and other funds, in exchange for an agreement to teach for five years in high-need schools
- Establishing an alternative route to teacher certification, e.g., by earning a master's degree and a certificate while teaching full time
- Improving the teacher interviewing and screening process, e.g., both school principal and university staff interview candidates
- Transforming teacher preparation and support by providing interdisciplinary, performance- and research-based, standards-aligned, content-enhanced teacher preparation
- Diagnosing teacher candidates' and teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical needs and providing individualized content-enhanced and teaching method modules developed and taught by exemplary faculty, including faculty from the subject area being taught
- Providing problem-based (that is, framing coursework and staff development based on problems that novice teachers encounter in their classes, schools, and communities) teacher preparation and mentoring for novice teachers
- Assessing students' performance as well as their knowledge and disposition as teachers in classrooms using the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards and UMBC UTE's Performance Based Teacher Evaluation indicators
- Providing skills and tools required for teachers to learn, e.g., computers, and instruction on how to use them

Provide teachers ongoing professional development by

- Providing novice teachers weekly mentoring and monthly detailed written feedback by expert urban teacher educators on how to further improve their teaching
- Providing paid whole-school professional development and comprehensive school reform training during summers
- Hiring substitute and mentor teachers in partnership high-needs schools to enable teachers to obtain staff development, e.g., to visit other classes and schools
- Providing all non-tenured teachers a minimum of one planning period per week (in a system that provides two to three planning periods per week)

Improve teacher retention by

- Clustering UMBC UTE teachers in partnership schools to stabilize teacher attrition and improve school climate thereby enabling school reform initiatives to take hold
- Providing teachers the skills they need to improve student learning, achievement, and attainment

- Considering previous student achievement and teacher staffing data when assessing student academic or school performance
- Awarding teachers and principals whose schools show three consecutive years of improved student achievement

An evaluation of the programs comparing first grade reading and math scores in schools with similar characteristics showed that over three years of this program, SUPPORT Project schools' 1st grade students showed on average 85 percent gains on CTBS reading (from 36 percent to 64 percent) and math (from 29 percent to 56 percent) median percentile scores while comparison schools' scores declined or remained stable (from 44 percent to 35 percent on reading and 35 percent to 34 percent on math).

Special Education Approaches to Improving Professional Development in Literacy

Diane Pedrotty Bryant is Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education at The University of Texas in Austin. Also, she is the Project Director of the Special Education Reading Project for the Texas Education Agency, Division of Special Education. She provided information about reading intervention projects that focus on promoting effective reading instruction for struggling readers with particular emphasis on the Special Education Reading Project, which is a statewide project in Texas.

The primary mission of the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA) is to develop products that support improved reading instruction for use among the 20 Regional Educational Service Centers in Texas, which provide professional development to local school districts. All products developed by the TCRLA are aligned to state standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), in reading and language arts.

TCRLA develops products for and sponsors several professional development efforts aimed at improving reading instruction. They include the following:

1. *Professional Development Guides for Teacher Reading Academies.* Across the state, K-2 teachers are eligible to attend the Teacher Reading Academies and learn about best practices for teaching reading. These academies cover phonemic awareness, fluency, word study and spelling, and listening and reading comprehension. Through staff development by curriculum specialists and training-of-trainers models, the academies provide teachers with research-based reading and writing strategies that can be integrated into instruction. Professional Development Guides, developed by the TCRLA, structure these academies. Components of the professional development guides include slides, speaker notes, handouts, and references.
2. *Regional Reading Institutes.* Linking with Education Service Centers to provide professional development on strategies identified by regions serves as the purpose of the Regional Reading Institutes. These regional institutes were targeted for elementary and secondary general and special education teachers and administrators. The institutes were structured as full day, 1.5 to 3 hour sessions. The Education Service Center's general and special education reading liaisons sponsored these regional institutes.
3. *Special Education Reading Project (SERP).* SERP contains a number of components: the Reading Initiative and Special Education (RISE) Task Force, professional development guide adaptations, regional institutes, a co-teaching booklet, adaptations to the "red book," and the special education institutes. (The red book refers to Beginning Reading

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Instruction: Components and Features of a Research-Based Reading Program, published by the Texas Reading Initiative.)

The 15 members of the RISE Task Force represent special education directors at the Educational Service Centers and local educational agencies, parents, members of professional organizations, such as the Council for Exceptional Children, and elementary and secondary special education teachers and principals.

The SERP elementary institute was developed for elementary educators, including general and special educators, who teach students who are struggling with reading and are reading at a K, 1, or 2 grade level. As such, the RISE Task Force recommended that the SERP elementary institute contain information on basic literacy from the K-2 academies as well as instructional adaptations. An adaptations framework was developed and included in the SERP elementary institute. Components of the framework include

- What does a student need to be successful in the general education curriculum?
- What do we expect from students?
- What are the setting demands?
- What do we know about the student?
- What are the needs of a student ?
- What adaptations appear appropriate?
- How do we determine whether these are working?

Additionally, the adaptations framework includes a continuum that considers the intensity and pervasiveness of instructional adaptations. The Education Service Centers' reading liaisons and curriculum specialists are responsible for providing staff development to elementary teachers who wish to attend this institute.

Lessons for districts and states with regard to improving professional development in literacy include the importance of

Using specific, usable instructional practices rather than a menu of approaches

- Sharing decision making between researchers and teachers about how to address issues
- Institutionalizing support team meetings
- Modeling and peer coaching that provides support for implementation
- Fostering dialogue around classroom-based issues and dilemmas
- Encouraging all teachers to utilize the same strategic approaches towards producing student gains

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR DIVERSITY-RESPONSIVE SCHOOL REFORM

David Ramirez, Executive Director, Center for Language Minority Education and Research at California State University, Long Beach; Brenda Layton, Executive Director, Instructional Services and Kathy Larson, Principal of Heritage Elementary School, both of the Woodburn School District in Oregon, addressed the importance of professional development to systemic education reform, particularly "diversity-responsive" professional development.

This presentation focused on work being done in the Woodburn School District, one of several districts with which the Center for Language Minority Education and Research works. Fifty-nine percent of the district's students are English language learners (compared to 25 percent statewide); 42 percent are migrants (compared to 6 percent statewide); and 80 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch (compared to 34 percent statewide.)

Changes in schooling are needed to meet the needs of 21st century. School reform must respond to issues of language, race, culture, ethnicity, and class. Demographic changes mean more non-English speaking students and parents, and more graduates who will need to function in a global village where multiple languages are spoken. Parents need someone in the school who can speak their language. Schools must produce students who can function effectively in a democracy – reach out, negotiate, find common needs. Also, schools must give kids a sense of justice.

These reforms must address curriculum, instruction, roles and responsibilities, organization and administration, home/school/community collaboration, and accountability. Successful professional development is the key to successful school reform. Research shows that there are certain components of successful professional development: theoretical/research foundations, modeling, practice, and follow-through training (coaching, mentoring, learning community, action research).

The framework for change must address high standards for all students, language acquisition and development, anti-racism, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, community learning, and technology.

In Woodburn the strategy has been to "train the trainers" – identify master teachers at each grade level and give them training to pass on, make them team leaders, have them do action research, and create a learning community. They pass their training onto other teachers in their building through two to three days of initial intensive training, monthly observations in classrooms, coaching, weekly online reflections, and creating exemplary units of practice.

The strategy involves providing kids a thorough experience in both English and their native language (mostly Spanish and Russian in this district) and getting them to fluency as soon as possible with the strongest outcomes. The idea is to do this while helping all kids improve. For example, the strategy revealed that some students who speak English only still need help with their English. By focusing specifically on student needs, the district discovered that their Russian immigrant students often spoke one of two forms of Russian – a formal version of the language and a more local vernacular. This shaped the needs of the students. The schools were able to preserve a sense of the students' culture by calling the more formal Russian "academic" and focusing on bringing kids up to speed in it.

The district uses Oregon statewide tests as well as local tests to monitor improvement. Outcomes are disaggregated by language spoken, whether the student has been "reclassified" as fluent in English, and compared to both the district and state averages. The district also tracks different cohorts of students, including those who have stayed with the district for the duration of the reform and those who are new to the district. The results of state assessments show improvement in the performance of the students reclassified as fluent in English in both reading and math.

To implement this type of program total support and leadership is needed from the district and principal. In addition, master teachers are needed to function in a "train the trainer" model as are coaches to evaluate trained teachers.

An obstacle encountered in implementing the program included resistance by some teachers to begin to teach English to language minority students until they were fluent in their native language. However, research shows this to be a good thing to do. Teachers' beliefs about what to teach and when to teach it had to be changed. Many obstacles can be traced back to colleges of

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teacher education, which do not provide adequate knowledge of how to focus on the needs of the student and inadequate courses preparing new teachers to deal with issues of language, race and culture.

"STANDARDS IN PRACTICE"

Kathy Witherup, New Programs Manager for the Cincinnati Public Schools, and Ellen Dougherty, Senior Associate in The Education Trust, described the Standards in Practice (SIP) model, its purpose, and each of its six steps. Also, they modeled how trainers use SIP to build teacher effectiveness and a lasting professional learning community.

The SIP model was created to address the problem that teachers were giving low-level assignments – often teaching from the book – rather than creating challenging lessons based on the standards. It also addresses the difficulty of getting teachers to share, talk, and critique one another in a constructive way (i.e. form professional learning communities).

The primary purpose of the SIP model is to help teachers create high-quality, challenging, standards-based assignments, and a process in which teachers can collectively engage in thoughtful, reflective practice. The presenters emphasized that SIP is meant only to serve as a springboard for provoking the effectiveness of all events taking place in each teacher's classroom. SIP is an ongoing quality control process to align any assignment or program with national, state, or local content standards.

The SIP model also was created to replace the typical "one-shot" professional development workshops. Because these workshops often are unconnected to the curriculum and standards teachers are required to incorporate into the classroom, this kind of professional development has little impact on improving teacher practice. Rather than offering just a single strategy, the SIP model provides a process to build thoughtful, reflective practice among teachers within the context of a professional learning community.

The model requires the creation of cross-grade and subject area teacher teams, where teachers are grouped not only horizontally (within grade), but vertically (across grades) as well. Also sufficient time (usually 90 minutes) must be provided each week for the teams to go through the six-step process. The ultimate goal is for teachers themselves to own the process, so that the SIP coaches are no longer needed by the teams.

During each SIP session, a teacher presents a lesson that he or she has prepared to the other members of the team. The SIP model facilitator then takes the teachers through a series of six steps in the following order:

- Complete the assignment.
- Analyze the demands of the task.
- Identify the standards (local, state, etc.) that apply.
- Generate a rough scoring guide* from the standards and the assignment.
- Score the student work using the guide.
- Ask whether this assignment meets the standards. If not, how should it be modified to do so?

(*The scoring guide is not a state rubric, but specific to each assignment; its purpose is to provide students with information about what the teacher expects in the completion of the assignment.)

Following step six of the SIP process, the team of teachers develops a clear action plan for improving and aligning assignments to standards.

After only one year of implementing the SIP program in Cincinnati, outside evaluators found significant progress in student achievement based on third grade proficiency test results.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: SIX ESSENTIALS OF WHOLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Dr. Mary C. Nash is principal of the Mary Lyon School, a 21st Century lead school in the Boston Plan for Excellence. She also is a "collegial coach" for 16 other principals to assist them in improving performance within their schools. Richard Martin is the Coach Support Coordinator in the Boston Plan for Excellence. In addition, he works directly with teachers and principals in schools on a weekly basis as a "change coach."

Dr. Nash painted a picture of the Boston Public Schools 10 years ago as a district managed from the top down, a place of "textbook" teaching where skill and knowledge were never transferred from one teacher to the next. She says six years ago new leadership turned that triangle upside down. Now principals are required to spend half of their time in the classroom and teachers are no longer isolated. The bottom line for Boston's standards-based reform plan, implemented by new Superintendent Tom Payzant, was growing teacher knowledge to improve student performance.

In the four-year "Plan for Excellence," cohorts of schools are in different implementation phases based on six elements of reform. For example, the first cohort of schools has fully implemented their reform programs based on the Boston Plan's reform model, called "Whole School Improvement." The underlying theory is that improved instruction will improve student achievement. The way to improve instruction is to support teachers at their school sites as they learn in collaboration with each other.

The six "essentials" are summarized below:

1. First, schools must identify and use a schoolwide instructional focus to meet students' needs. In the first cohort of schools, 90 percent of the buildings chose literacy as their instructional focus. Those schools that have fully implemented the literacy focus have now added numeracy and mathematical thinking.
2. Second, schools must look at student work and data as a basis for identifying students' needs, improving instruction and assignments, assessing student progress, and informing and directing professional development. Each school will set and meet at least two measures of student performance – one based on standardized tests and one based on classroom performance. All children within the school are expected to show improvement. A school portfolio of student work products is used to measure improvement. Also, a school "scorecard" is reported to the whole school community each year.
3. Third, every school and every teacher must have an individual professional development plan and the two must be linked, e.g., "How can my professional development amplify the math or literacy objectives of the school?" The plan must be targeted to provide teachers and principals the knowledge and skills they need to improve instruction in the core subjects.
4. Fourth, schools must aim to learn and use best teaching practices. Every school has a "content coach" one day each week to work with teachers on theory, strategies, and practices, as well as to provide one-on-one support in the classroom. In addition, the

district periodically sends "change coaches" to schools – like "paratroopers" who drop in to help drive reform.

5. Fifth, schools must take a hard look at all of their resources--e.g., staff, time, funding--and align them with the instructional focus. Projects and programs that do not support the instructional focus must be eliminated.

6. Sixth, parents and communities must be involved in whole school reform. They are of key importance in supporting students.

Each school in Boston is on a continuum of reform. Initially, this involves convening the instructional leadership team to assess the school and develop a Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP). All schools are required to conduct an initial School Assessment Summary (SAS) to examine where the school is on each of the six key essentials and to update it periodically. (The SAS and WSIP are refined and reviewed each year, not rewritten.) A focus for improvement is established as a result of these reviews and the school's professional development plan is aligned to this focus. Every student is measured and every teacher makes periodic changes to his/her own professional development plan accordingly.

After several years of implementing the Boston Plan for Excellence, students within the first cadre of schools have shown measurable improvements. Student performance is the bottom line and the difference in kids' performance is caused by the quality of teaching.

IV. Concurrent Sessions: Interagency Collaboration

The four sessions summarized below focused on the importance of collaborative strategies. Two of the four examined extended learning opportunities. One addressed after-school programs for low-achieving students and the other described a community-based youth service program that provides a range of health and human welfare services. The third was devoted to programs serving Pre-K children identified as having an "educational need." And the fourth explored strategies that encourage collaboration across education programs, e.g.,Title I and IDEA.

Extended Learning Opportunities: A Public-Private Partnership at Work in South Carolina

Greg Tolbert, Executive Director, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Spartanburg; Kendrick Meekins, Director of Operations, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Spartanburg; and Carol Garner, Assistant Superintendent, Spartanburg County School District #7, focused on the major characteristics of the extended day and summer programs available in all elementary, middle, and junior high schools in Spartanburg from three perspectives: the schools, the Boys & Girls Clubs' approach, and club operations. The major theme from all three presenters was one of collaboration, cooperation, and partnership.

Carol Garner reviewed the necessity of extended learning opportunities and highlighted the key elements of the program strategy in Spartanburg as follows:

- Focusing on low-achieving students: the program is available in all elementary and junior high schools and focuses on providing more time and resources for low-performing students. Although the days and times vary according to site needs, a 90-minute direct instruction component is a key element at every site. Transportation home is available at every site.
- Small class size: class sizes are kept small (1-15 students) to make sure *all* students learn, and certified teachers are responsible for the academic component.
- The funding strategy is multi-pronged and is made available through several resources: Title I, Goals 2000, state innovation resources, county-funded grants, and other local resources.
- Principal as key: the critical role of the principal was stressed as that of a cheerleader who involves key faculty, negotiates facility issues, shares authority with the unit director, helps build capacity, and works with community partners.
- Data analysis: data on student achievement are collected, analyzed, evaluated, and used to develop effective intervention strategies. The data indicate marked improvement in student academic achievement as a result of the after-school program.

Greg Tolbert focused on the Boys & Girls Clubs of America (B&GCA) youth development strategy, whose key components include

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- Providing cultural, educational, character-building, leadership, life skills, and recreational activities in a safe, supervised setting after direct instruction
- Activities designed to reinforce learning, provide real-world connections with school, and improve achievement
- Collaboration with the local school administration and staff

Part of the explanation for the success of this program relates to resource availability. A club's typical yearly budget averages $73,000, which is approximately $370/youth served for 200 youth annually in the 40-week program. The costs include a full-time unit director, six part-time staff, program supplies, snacks, and transportation.

Five school sites have formed collaborative partnerships with the B&GCA. Greg Tolbert stressed the importance of getting to measurable results by instilling competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence via program delivery designed to realize long-term outcomes.

Kendrick Meekins discussed his role in planning the local program, supervising and training staff, handling discipline issues, coordinating food and supply purchases, and coordinating special events. He monitors and measures the accomplishments of the program, encourages community collaborations, and maintains and promotes an open dialogue with the school faculty, principal, and the district, as well as reports results to the community.

All three commented that there were many elements to a successful after-school program but the key ones are keeping it a team effort, maintaining a proper focus (it's all about kids), strong and committed leadership by the principal, and keeping one's eyes on the big picture.

TITLE I AND IDEA COLLABORATION: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND COMMON CHALLENGES

Joanne Cashman, Director of the Policymakers Partnership, National Association of State Directors of Special Education; Johnnie Grissom, Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education; Bob Harmon, Title I/Learning Assistance Director, Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Alexa Pochowski, Assistant Commissioner of Special Education, Kansas State Department of Education, described opportunities available under the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to encourage Title I and IDEA collaboration and state efforts to pursue greater collaboration.

The objectives of federal special education and compensatory education policy are quite similar: supporting state and local efforts to enable all children to reach challenging standards by providing additional resources for schools and students who have the farthest to go to reach the goal of academic proficiency. Providing inclusive and integrated supports to students in general education classrooms offers the optimal environment for most students eligible for compensatory or special education services. Yet, departments of special and compensatory education, from the state level to the classroom, typically do not work with each other to design and deliver coordinated services or instruction. Reasons for this range from fears that collaboration may result in a loss of student services to an ignorance of what is permissible under federal law. The presenters described what is permissible under federal law and emerging state efforts to encourage collaboration among state-level staff and local schools.

Joanne Cashman discussed national strategies to support collaboration, their impact, and lessons learned. Section 300.234 of the IDEA regulations enable an LEA to use Part B IDEA funds to carry out a schoolwide program under Section 1114 of ESEA . A joint Dear Colleague letter from

the Offices of Special Education Programs and Compensatory Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education sent to the states in January 2001 reminded them of this opportunity.

In addition, Cashman described the efforts of CCSSO and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) as part of the Policymakers Partnership to encourage collaboration among six states: Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. Each state has participated in a peer technical assistance match that developed a vision of collaboration and identified both barriers and opportunities for collaboration. Lessons from these matches, which were held in November and December of 2000, spurred a number of follow-up activities and a commitment to share progress with interested states and districts nationally.

Alexa Pochowski focused on several strategies used by the Kansas State Department of Education to encourage Title I and IDEA collaboration:

- Sharing knowledge with SEA staff about what is possible
- Communicating with local education agencies (LEAs) through a brochure about the possibilities of collaboration
- Encouraging joint planning between Title I and special education
- Developing a joint leadership conference focused on continuous improvement
- Supporting legislative changes to allocate state funds collaboratively
- Re-organizing technical assistance staff to cross-agency regional teams
- Conducting integrated reviews and monitoring for special education, Title I, and technical education
- Developing pilot models for schoolwide programs to include students with disabilities

Each strategy has been successful to date at increasing awareness and understanding of how Title I and special education can better work together.

Remaining challenges include changing Kansas state law to allow for more flexible use of state special education funds, integrating documentation for program compliance, and ensuring that pilot models that blend resources do not lose money. For example, under certain scenarios, schools that combine resources may be unable to carry over unexpended categorical funds into the next fiscal year budget. Kansas is also hopeful that the monitoring for special education, Title I, and technical education will evolve and conjoin into broader models of curriculum, instruction, and professional development.

Johnnie Grissom also articulated several state strategies for encouraging greater collaboration. Expanding knowledge among state education agency staff about existing roles and opportunities has been an immediate challenge. In particular, sharing knowledge that general education has primary responsibility for implementing the IEP in many cases, and that under IDEA special education can provide incidental benefits to students without disabilities has been a major focus. Kentucky already encourages state-level collaboration among categorical programs, beyond Title I and IDEA, because all federal programs reside in one office. These programs include the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Innovative Education Program Strategies), and Part D of the ESEA, neglected and delinquent education. Kentucky has begun a number of pilot projects among school districts to implement cross-program collaboration statewide and build capacity at the SEA and LEA levels by developing a mentor and "mentee" program with a focus on low-performing schools. Additionally, Kentucky is trying to identify the

impact that collaboration has on achievement and is developing leadership to support collaboration.

Other effective strategies shared by Grissom to support collaboration include reducing state special education regulations from a 90-page to a 27-page document, including finance officers in meetings and training regarding collaboration, and prorating positions so that staff have the flexibility to work on more than one program.

Challenges to collaboration discussed during the Kentucky presentation include the limited credibility that the U.S. Department of Education or the states have with LEAs with respect to encouraging collaboration because of their histories of sending mixed messages; requiring separate accounting systems despite the opportunity to blend funds; the perception that "my program will lose money if we collaborate"; and the need to focus coordinated reviews and monitoring on student indicators instead of programs. Nevertheless, Grissom encouraged the session participants to think about who benefits from collaboration and to worry about the money later.

Bob Harmon offered the fourth and final presentation based on the efforts of Washington State to encourage collaboration. After participating in a peer technical assistance match in late fall 2000, learning more about opportunities to combine funds in schoolwide programs and receiving assurances from U.S. Department of Education staff that blending funds was permissible, the Washington State team returned home with the intention of enlisting schools as schoolwide pilots and developing guidance for the pilot schools. Washington engaged participation from fiscal officers, auditors, the superintendent's cabinet, and program directors and staff at both the federal and state levels. In developing the guidance, they realized that while they had the authority to combine federal funds, they did not have state funds beyond those supporting compensatory education. Nevertheless the SEA developed a draft guidance document that was disseminated during the session and has committed to working with the attorney general's office to consider the legality of coordinating state funds. This initial guidance was released to the LEAs in June 2001. Next steps planned by the state to encourage collaboration include conducting technical assistance workshops, selecting at least two pilot schools in implementation, partnering with pilot schools, and developing a legislative agenda to enable the combining of state funds into schooltime programs.

Harmon closed with the following recommendations for next steps:

- There is merit to having the budget people get together across states so they can share information about each other's fiscal systems.
- Bringing in pilots from across several states would be a helpful peer learning opportunity.
- Postsecondary education teacher preparation programs need to be modified to include the use of blended programs (teachers do not know how to accommodate/modify curriculum for creating access to general education). The Policymakers Partnership (PMP) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) are working on this issue.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATION

Jane Quinn and Marta Rodriguez Revera, Children's Aid Society, Children's Aid Community Schools, discussed the program strategies of a community school in effectively reaching and serving the health and human services needs of youth before, during, and after regular school hours.

A community school is one that is open during non-school hours as well as the regular school day that extends its services beyond the traditional services of the regular school day. There are many models of community schools: the *Beacons Model* in New York; the *Bridges to Success Model*, which was developed by the United Way of Central Indiana and is now spreading across the country through the United Way system; the *Virtual Y Model*, a YMCA program that is primarily an after-school program; the *Those Caring Communities Model*; and the *We Pick Model*, a university-assisted model developed by the University of Pennsylvania.

The Children's Aid Society is a community-based youth service organization. It is the oldest and largest youth service organization in New York. Its board just approved the budget for next year for $60 million. It is a member of both the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the Child Welfare League of America.

Their strategy is one of service delivery--they provide a continuum of services, everything from youth development, which is the primary enrichment service that all children need, to primary preventions (pregnancy prevention, drug prevention). They provide an array of child welfare services (adoption, foster care, and work with court-involved youth), as well as medical and dental services. Twenty percent of the society's budget goes toward medical services. They are considered a comprehensive services agency, with 36 service sites in New York City serving about 120,000 children per year.

One example of such a comprehensive system of community schools can be seen in New York. These are partnership schools, where Children's Aid provides medical, dental, mental health, and social services as well as before- and after-school programs and summer camps. The first two schools opened in 1992, and by 1999 there were eight schools in three neighborhoods. A ninth school opened in September 2001. They are adding about one school per year. These community schools follow a pattern of planned growth, which for them is about a strategic commitment of the agency's resources.

Some key features of the Children's Aid Community Schools are

- Long-term partnership for better or for worse: Children's Aid Community Schools, have a full partnership with the New York City Board of Education.
- Explicit agreements regarding roles at all levels: They have a written agreement regarding roles and responsibilities with all the local school districts the schools are in, as well as an agreement with the schools' principals. These schools would not be as successful as they have been without the full support of the principals.
- Full service schools: The Children's Aid Community Schools have drawn heavily on the research of Joy Dryfoos, author of *Full Service Schools*. She has been a key contributor in the way they have designed their model. Her approach to full service is to begin with a comprehensive needs assessment that includes the community and students as well as school staff and officials, to follow up with a response based on the identified needs, and to try and meet those needs. The idea is to surround young people with all the things that make a difference in promoting their healthy development and learning.
- Integration or coherence: The work that the Board of Education is responsible for and the work that the Children's Aid Community Schools is responsible for are planned and implemented together.

- Joint ongoing planning and assessment: Since the institution of the School Leadership Team structure, Children's Aid has had a great opportunity to be at the table when each school develops its Comprehensive Education Plan. The Children's Aid Community Schools site directors are on the schools' leadership teams. They meet with parents and Board of Education partners about what they are committing themselves to do and how they will finance it. Children's Aid contributes financial resources, human resources, and a knowledge base different from what the Board of Education has and that compliments what the Board does.

The core program components of Children's Aid Community Schools are

- Extended day: The Children's Aid Community Schools focus on enrichment in extended day, though remediation is provided by the Board of Education.
- Evening programs for young people in the neighborhood who may not go to the Children's Aid Schools: They provide programs for those young people with nothing to do once the regular school day has ended. Some, if not most of the schools, are in gang-ridden neighborhoods, so it is important to provide constructive services for young people.
- Parent/family involvement: The community schools have very extensive parent and family involvement programs.
- Health services/education: The full service schools have medical, dental, and mental health services, as well as a host of adult education programs. Not all of the schools are full service, but they are working towards that as a long-term goal.
- Adult education: The adult education classes are not only for the parents of the students but all adults. They offer GED, ESL, and computer courses.

PRE-K IN CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG: A "BRIGHT BEGINNING"

Susan Agruso, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Accountability, Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, and Cheryl Merritt, Principal, Double Oaks Pre-Kindergarten and Family Resources Center, Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, provided an overview of the *Bright Beginnings* program. This summary is augmented by material presented by Anthony F. Bucci ,Title I director in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, during a CCSSO conference in September 1999.

Bright Beginnings was established to address a concern that a large number of children were entering kindergarten in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) without important experiences and skills necessary for them to succeed academically. The primary goals of *Bright Beginnings* are first, to increase the number of children beginning kindergarten on grade level for reading and second, to assure that 85 percent of third grade students read at or above grade level. In its fourth year of operation, the program is serving 1,974 students in three centers and seven elementary schools. Additionally, 300 students are being served in 16 private child care sites through a partnership with Smart Start. The pre-kindergarten classes typically serve 17-19 students for six hours a day. Before- and after-school services are provided at some sites.

Bright Beginnings is a pre-kindergarten program for four-year-old children in the district whose language and cognitive development are below the typical level for their age. This meant that the children targeted for services were deemed to have an "educational need," rather than targeted on the basis of low family income or other more typical "risk" factors. It is a child-centered

program, with a strong focus on language development and emergent literacy. It employs a literacy-rich written curriculum, which is required to be taught, while simultaneously providing key experiences that lay the foundation for early school success. The curriculum is informed by research on emergent literacy and language learning. It contains developmental objectives, Pre-K literacy benchmarks, content standards, and performance expectations derived from and aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The centerpiece of the curriculum is the unit. Unit components include thematic connections, content maps, unit books and emergent books, curriculum "book webs," concept maps, literacy lessons, center activities, and family activities.

Guiding principles inform decisions about literacy and language, instruction, assessment, family-school partnerships, and professional development. For example, literacy activities are embedded within the framework of a developmentally appropriate curriculum; assessment is ongoing and continuous, and relies on appropriate and typical classroom activities. Collaboration with the community and with other partners also is a very important aspect of the program. Lastly, strong parent participation through parent/family involvement and partnerships are essential elements of the program. Support for families enhances the academic success of their children, and family-school partnerships benefit the child, the family, and the school. Those are the foundation blocks of this program.

Professional development is fundamental to the success of the program. Title I requires that every teacher in a pre-kindergarten be certified to teach in this setting. North Carolina has a birth through kindergarten certification (BK). Every teacher in the program is either currently BK certified or provisionally certified. Title I pays for the graduate work necessary to qualify for this certification. In effect, there is a career ladder. There are teaching assistants in the program who have an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree. They receive help towards finishing the courses they need to qualify for certification.

This is not a stand-alone program. It is linked to the district's academic achievement goals called Goals 2001. The first academic achievement goal is that at least 85 percent of third graders will be reading at or above grade level by the end of 2001. This pre-kindergarten program is part of a Pre-K through three continuum of effort to help achieve that goal.

The six key components that comprise the *Bright Beginnings* approach to pre-kindergarten education are

- The target population is comprised of four year olds identified as having an "educational need" through screening of their language and cognitive abilities.
- The curriculum provides a rich, child-centered, literacy focus.
- Strong parent and family involvement activities are carried out to engage family members in each child's educational achievement.
- Multiple community partnerships have been developed to assure advocacy for the range of needs facing Bright Beginnings programs.
- Ongoing professional development for teachers and teaching assistants is provided through a partnership with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
- Assessment of children's classroom accomplishments is continuous and relies on appropriate and typical classroom activities. Data is gathered through multiple sources including observation and interactions.

Chapter 1/Title I had always been the major vehicle for Pre-K in CMS. However, it was a relatively small portion of the Title I budget (approximately 12 percent). Title I followed a somewhat typical model of serving a large number of schools. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg,

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however, there had been, since 1992, a focus on early intervention through Title I support. It provided services to approximately 45 elementary schools through schoolwide support, Reading Recovery, and pre-kindergarten programs. A significant expansion of Pre-K would mean eliminating Title I support for all schools except for those whose poverty level exceeded 75 percent.

Now, approximately 85 percent of CMS's Title I grant is used to fund approximately 85 percent of *Bright Beginnings*. The rest of the support for the program is obtained through collaborative efforts and local sources. Schools that previously had Title I support are now provided additional support through the district's "Differentiated Staffing" plan. Under this plan, schools receive additional locally supported teaching staff based on their poverty level. Thus, no school previously receiving Title I support lost services as a result of shifting the majority of the Title I grant to pre-kindergarten.

The components deemed essential to the success of *Bright Beginnings* encompass

- Consistency across the program in use of a literacy rich curriculum
- Strong parent participation
- Integrated professional development
- Vibrant community partnerships
- Continuous research and evaluation
- Significant commitment of federal and local funds
- Supportive leadership from Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District Board and leadership staff

Bright Beginnings has had remarkable results on student achievement. Data collected over the first three years of program implementation showed that students who participated in this program continue to outperform eligible nonparticipants. In addition, the gap at the end of first grade between *Bright Beginnings*' students and nonparticipants is larger than it was at the end of kindergarten.

Additionally, a higher percentage of African American students who participated in *Bright Beginnings* performed at or above grade level compared to African American students who did not participate. A higher percentage of free and reduced lunch students who participated in *Bright Beginnings* performed at or above grade level compared to free and reduced lunch students who did not participate. Finally, the gap in achievement for *Bright Beginnings* participants compared to all other students is about one half the gap between eligible nonparticipants and all other students.

V. Literacy Development Approaches

The third plenary session focused on literacy instruction and development. Susan Burns, Associate Professor at George Mason University, provided an overview of the key issues around literacy instruction and what it means to be a skilled reader, accompanied with an illustration of an effective reading program. Her presentation was followed by concurrent sessions on literacy development that focused on literacy programs in high school, along with literacy programs for English language learners (ELL). One focused on inclusiveness and the other on overall literacy development for ELLs. In addition, there was a session on Success for All's effectiveness as a sustainable education program, especially for students with disabilities. Summaries of these presentations follow.

SUSAN BURNS

Burns concentrated primarily on elementary and middle schools but indicated that some of the same issues need to be addressed in high schools. Her comments focused on what all children need to be effective readers. She explained that one of the starting points in a literacy approach is to provide children with a solid foundation. They have to be motivated to read, write, and develop oral language, phonetic awareness, and letter knowledge. In addition, reading involves not only decoding but also comprehension. The goal for all children is to be fluent in skilled reading. She continued by citing research that shows up to 20 percent of children are not getting what is required for achieving effective reading skills.

Burns identified the elements of skilled reading and its essential components as follows:

- Brief fixation on most words
- Rapid/auto phonological processing of words
- Strong use of context for comprehension and comprehension monitoring
- Close relationship between reading and listening comprehension
- Limited effects of context on word decoding

Burns maintained that children at risk of school failure have the greatest need for effective reading instruction. These children can be grouped into two categories:

Group Risks

- Those students in low-performing schools or those who will be placed there
- Students whose primary language is not English
- Children who live in low-income neighborhoods and/or come from low-income families

Individual Risks

- Children whose parents have difficulty reading and/or have a specific reading impairment, e.g., dyslexia

- Children whose home experiences and/or childcare experiences are not rich in language usage
- Children with cognitive, language and/or hearing impairments

Opportunities in the preschool years to facilitate the ability to read include

- Instilling in children a genuine enthusiasm for reading and writing (motivation).
- Modeling behavior. Children need to have the opportunity to witness adults around them (especially parents) reading for enjoyment.
- Connecting a child's favorite activities with reading and books; creating a warm and inviting atmosphere (e.g. story time); making books available that reflect the child's interests, (i.e. content).
- Developing oral language skills, including
- Speech discrimination (e.g., distinguishing between "wash" and "watch").
- Phonological awareness (understanding that speech is composed of a sequence of sounds (phonemes) that are *re*combined to form *other* words).
- Having meaningful subjects to talk about; focusing on listening comprehension, vocabulary and language development; and understanding the narrative of a story.

There are some effective prevention programs for children who are likely to experience learning difficulties. The characteristics of these strategies include

- Screening for developmental risks
- Providing strong language and literacy environments
- Providing access to books and other literacy tools
- Providing developmental interventions that address specific needs

Tools of the Mind, a program in reading instruction, also describes opportunities in reading instruction, such as

- Promoting enthusiasm and success in learning to read, and in learning by reading and writing
- Providing instruction to identify printed words
- Explaining the uses and functions of written language
- Offering instruction in the ability to gain meaning from reading
- Practicing to achieve fluency

Burns stressed that K-3 instruction for students with limited English proficiency should provide instructional guides, learning materials, and locally based proficient teachers in the students' home language. With the exception of Spanish language speakers, one difficulty in building the capacity to address the needs of LEP students is insufficient numbers of children with a particular home language to justify the development of the local infrastructure to meet their needs.

In an effort to achieve early identification of risk and undertake prevention in the classroom, regular assessment of the following skills is essential: word recognition accuracy, reading fluency, conceptual knowledge, comprehension strategies, and timely and effective instructional responses by teachers to at-risk students.

For early identification of reading difficulties, effective intervention programs include supplementary reading programs that should be provided in the first grade; availability of a reading specialist; and provision of materials and instructional techniques that are well integrated with ongoing, excellent classroom instruction.

In concluding, Burns noted that the integration of code and meaning-oriented instruction needs to be going on at the same time in the context of the same activities. In addition, choice of instructional activities should be part of an overall, coherent approach to supporting literacy development.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT MODEL (TDM): A BALANCED LITERACY PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Alta Shaw, Senior Instructional Facilitator from the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At-Risk (CRESPAR), gave an overview of TDM used in reforming middle and high school programs.

The focus of the TDM is to help initiate reform in high schools that face serious problems with student attendance, discipline, achievement scores, and dropout rates. The model consists of specific changes in school organization and management that establish a strong, positive school climate for learning. There are curriculum and instructional innovations to transition all students into advanced high school work in English and mathematics. Parent and community involvement activities encourage students' career and college development, and professional development systems support implementation of the recommended reforms. Though more prescriptive than other high school reform programs, CRESPAR strives to balance committed implementation of core model components with a reliance on school-based teachers and administrators to own and adapt the TDM to meet the needs of the school.

The TDM's key components are summarized below:

1. First, a Ninth Grade Success Academy – This is a self-contained, school-within-a-school organized around interdisciplinary teams designed to provide ninth graders with a smooth transition into high school. There is a flexible block schedule with extended periods, where teachers on the same team teach the same group of students during the same block of time each school day. These extended class periods also allow for a greater variety of "student-centered" instructional approaches such as cooperative learning, projects and simulations. Ninth grade students receive a double-dose of math and English instruction (80-90 minutes a day for the whole year). They are also immersed into a strategic reading course and a transition to advanced mathematics courses. A special ninth grade course, Freshman Seminar, gives students the information they need to succeed in high school. In addition, during the first semester students take three research-based courses designed to enable then to overcome poor prior preparations and succeed in standards-based high school courses.
2. Second, Career Academies for the upper grades -- These are self-contained, small learning communities with a career focus that enroll 250-350 students in grades 10, 11, and 12. These academies provide students with a college-preparatory curriculum and work-based learning experiences supported by industry partners. Students study in one of several career pathways within the academy and teachers are organized into pathway teams.

3. Third, professional development and implementation support -- This includes 25-30 hours of specific professional development, and weekly peer-based, in-classroom curriculum coaching from school district teachers on special assignment and Johns Hopkins University instructional facilitators.

This program has been implemented in schools in Baltimore and Philadelphia. During the 1999-2000 school year the Talent Development High School (TDHS) 9th grade instructional program was field tested in three Baltimore City nonselective neighborhood high schools. Evaluations revealed a significant positive impact of this program on student achievement and on teachers. First, TDM significantly improved student achievement in the field test schools. For example, they had substantially greater gains in math and reading achievement as measured by the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills-5 standardized test than students in three matched control schools. On average, these schools gained almost a half year more in mathematics achievement and nearly a full year more in reading achievement. In addition, the first semester catch-up courses were found to be on target and beneficial.

Teachers also gave high ratings to the initiative and indicated that the combination of materials, training, and in-class support enabled them to teach in a more effective manner. The teachers who worked as curriculum coaches and provided weekly in-classroom implementation assistance to teachers reported that the increased experience and confidence that came in the second year had enabled teachers to implement more of the first semester curriculum with higher degrees of fidelity during the second year of the field test.

MAX Teaching with Reading and Writing

Dr. Mark A. Forget, President and Director of Staff Development at *MAX Teaching with Reading Writing* in Decatur, Georgia, discussed the MAX teaching framework as a way of improving literacy skills of all students while they are in the process of learning content of vocational subject matter. (MAX stands for Motivation, Acquisition, and Extension, as described below.)

The challenge is for teachers to be able to use the MAX teaching framework to improve the literacy skills of all students in any subject. Every child needs to be motivated, and this literacy framework can motivate kids to want to read and learn. If a teacher practices a learning skill within a subject as opposed to just teaching the core subject, a child is more apt to pay attention and want to learn, and more apt to be able to experience success in the classroom. And the skill is one that can be used anywhere -- in college, in the work force and in life in general. The skill could be comprehension, note taking, memory, or speed reading; but in all cases it is taught within the core subject. In fact, it is used by the students to learn the subject matter. While practicing a literacy skill, students "acquire" that skill. The complex skills involved in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking cannot be "taught" to students. They can only be acquired, just as a person learns a first language. It is learned by using it, and by imitating those who are more accomplished at it. The desired outcome of this program is to encourage and to help create students who are more effective learners and thinkers.

The MAX program framework has three key components:

- A skill development procedure
- Systematic use of cooperative learning
- A three-step lesson framework that has reading as the centerpiece

The first component of the MAX teaching framework, a skill development procedure, is very systematic. The idea is to introduce in each class the content of the lesson and then explain the

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skill to be used, followed by modeling the use of the skill. Children are then put into guided practice. In most cases practicing the skill helps students comprehend, understand, and retain the information that was read.

Re-phrasing language for students who are significantly below their grade level in reading is another way to help students understand the material. This is done by taking something very complex and simplifying it to their level of understanding.

Encouraging interpretive reading from the beginning heightens the students' creative thinking skills. Higher order thinking involves manipulating ideas, synthesizing material, and thinking about how things might apply in real life, in an attempt to evaluate the author's intent. Engaging in this type of activity increases the likelihood of retaining information.

Cooperative learning is the second component. Forget outlined four features of successful cooperative learning:

- Individual written work (commitment)
- Small-group work comprised of heterogenous groups of poor, medium, and good readers (an attempt to come to consensus)
- Large group discussions, led by the teacher as the mediator/arbitrator
- A real problem to be solved (What does it say? Is it saying this or not? How should it be interpreted?)

Through systematic use of cooperative learning, with heterogeneous groups, students practice construction of meaning from the text. They are systematically enabled to practice, as a group, what a strategic reader does whenever reading. Thus, they are acquiring skills through practice that is facilitated by the teacher.

Forget stressed the importance of teaching children by using reading and writing in the classroom. He believes that the teacher should start by linking prior knowledge and helping students establish their need to find out something. This should be followed by actively probing the text and then getting together to construct meanings. This interactive learning helps students teach one another how to read.

The last component of MAX is a three-step lesson framework that involves

- **M**otivation - determine background knowledge, build background knowledge, establish purpose for reading, teacher models a learning skill.
- **A**cquisition - focus on purpose during reading, practice a learning skill, monitor comprehension, learn subject matter.
- **EX**tension - find out what students have learned, extend beyond the text, practice higher order thinking skills, students reflect on their use of learning skill.

There are hundreds of well-researched reading and writing strategies to use within the MAX teaching framework. Many are available through *MAX Teaching, Inc.*

IMPLEMENTING COMPREHENSIVE REFORM INCLUSIVE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Sofia Aburto from the Northern California Comprehensive Assistance Center at WestEd; Sandra Traback, the Principal of the Cesar E. Chavez Multicultural Academic Center, Chicago; and Patricia Brekke, a Bilingual Lead Teacher at Cesar E. Chavez Multicultural Academic Center,

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discussed the impact of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Model in the Chavez Center, especially as it has influenced English Language Learners..

Sandra Traback and Patricia Brekke described the Title VII Comprehensive School Improvement Grant that set in motion the changes at Cesar Chavez. When this grant proposal was written, the school was on the verge of probation and possible state takeover. The school is Pre-K to 9th grade, with students from a wide range of backgrounds. The following four objectives were the basis for their comprehensive school improvement plan:

- To purposely restructure processes and programs to maximize the possibility of bi-literacy among students including, but not limited to, a dual language program and foreign language component
- To expand the traditional four walls of a classroom through technology and other means to ride the "express bus" on the information highway around the world
- To provide continuous and definitive staff development to meet restructuring needs
- To provide an opportunity for parent training and partnership within the school and community

The mission of the Cesar W. Chavez Multicultural Academic Center is that all children should be prepared to be productive citizens in the 21st century. This requires a global educational perspective that utilizes a dual language, collaborative, and technological educational approach that prepares students to be critical thinkers and productive contributors in an ever-changing society.

The strategy for students upon entering the Multicultural Academic Center involves active participation in the following: a dual language approach (Spanish/English) in classrooms at the primary level, hands-on activities that integrate curriculum areas and promote cooperative learning, and participating in activities that will culminate in a multicultural event. Teachers are actively involved in team-teaching strategies and the utilization of technology, community as well as educational resources, field trips, guest speakers, and performing arts to bring the world into their classrooms. The seven Chavez "Cs" that have been adopted as a guide to plan, implement, assess, and redevelop school initiatives for school improvement are Commitment, Collaboration, Communication, Cultural Awareness, Community, Critical Thinking, and Compassion. The keys to Chavez's success were identified as staff development and a strong mission and vision.

Specific strategies that were implemented at Chavez include

- Year-round schooling.
- Evening program for students who have dropped out or have been put out of school.
- Organized standards by state goals and Chicago Academic Standards.
- Collaboration among teachers. Language arts, math and history teachers work together on units. They make more use of historical novels and fictional writing, rather than a textbook series.
- Restructuring of the school day. Fifteen minutes were added to each day so that teachers could use half days on alternate Fridays for coordinating and planning as teams.
- Making use of a daily and weekly "learning calendar" to assess and ensure the steady progress of each student in the classroom. This involved a learning and re-learning process to make sure no student was left behind.

- Students keeping "learning logs." They write down three things they have learned each day.
- Inclusive classrooms means that special education teachers work alongside mainstream teachers.
- Supporting teacher education. Tuition money was provided to staff to get master's degree in bilingual education.

Implementation of this strategy has led to improvement in scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills from 1996 to 2000. During the same time frame, reading scores have increased from 15.7 to 29.6, and math scores have increased from 14.6 to 40.2.

The third presenter, Sofia Aburto, complimented the preceding discussion by saying that the Cesar Chavez example demonstrated that standards can and should be adapted to English language learners. Her presentation focused mostly on the document "Going Schooltime: Comprehensive School Reform Inclusive of Limited English Proficient Students." It is a product of the Benchmark Study from the Institute for Policy Analysis and the Research Center for Applied Linguistics.

The study focused on how schools were using Title VII funds (that is, the comprehensive school reform grants). The research tools were modified so that schools could use them for self-assessment. These modified tools are the focus of the document. The Resource Guide offered:

- A framework for understanding comprehensive school reform
- Rubrics for assessing a school's progress
- Real school examples of high ratings
- Checklists to help collect evidence of progress on each dimension
- Rubric worksheets for self-reflection

Though this is a basic model of school reform, it has questions addressing English language students. The value of using this kind of tool is that it provides an opportunity to compare breadth, depth, and progress of a school's work against an external standard grounded in an understanding of exemplary schools.

Its intended audience is practitioners in districts and schools, service providers, regional labs, comprehensive centers, institutions of higher education, evaluators, and grant writers. Ms. Aburto concluded by adding that community relations, especially in gang-affiliated neighborhoods (where they have started alternative high schools) are an important part of school reform.

WHAT SUCCESS FOR ALL (SFA) TEACHERS SAY ABOUT INCLUSION AND SUSTAINMENT

Presenter: Susanna Purnell, Senior Project Associate, National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)

This session reviewed an on-going study about how students with disabilities fare in the Success for All (SFA) program, and how sustainable the program is. It examined factors that facilitate or hinder the sustainability of the program. The researchers chose Success for All because it has a history of helping students in the bottom quartile and also working with students with disabilities. For more information on Success For All, go to its website: http://www.successforall.net/.

The researchers were conducting case studies of four schools over four years (1999-2002), followed by a cross-site analysis of the data as their methodological approach to analyzing the sustainability of the Success for All program as well as the experience of students with disabilities. The four elementary schools were in the same urban district, which at the beginning of the study had designated all four as targeted-assistance schools due to low performance.

To assess the sustainability of the program researchers created a conceptual framework based on the literature on change, organization, implementation and reform. The framework identifies seven indicators that a reform is sustained and three sets of factors that support or hinder that sustainment. The seven indicators are

- Outcomes: The innovation continues to positively impact student outcomes.
- Delivery: Program elements and rationale continue to be in place (e.g., all elements of Success for All program are delivered).
- Exposure: Innovation continues to be exposed to the targeted population over time.
- Resources: Resources are allocated to continue program delivery.
- Skills Learned: Program deliverers have learned the needed skills.
- Support: Organizational leaders and participants continue to support the program (e.g., district, principal, and other stakeholders).
- Culture and Norms: Innovation is incorporated into the school culture and formal policies reflect expected behavior and practices.

In the framework, three categories of factors can support or hinder sustainability:

Category I (School and Classroom Capacity)

Leadership (effective skills, sustained and explicitly committed to reform)
Individual capacity (skills and attitudes of teachers/staff)
Professional learning community (promoting collaborative learning, problem solving, continuous improvement)
Structural conditions (school organization channels, incentives, classroom organization to support reform)
Physical conditions (availability and use of financial resources, how time is used, school size/space)

Category II (External Factors)

Regulations (formal rules, laws, formulas, and mandates)
Program Definition (standards, goals, curricular frameworks, and graduation requirements)
Accountability (assessments, accreditations, and monitoring)
Capacity Building (resources and ongoing professional development)

Category III (Innovation Characteristics):

Scope (challenging but not overwhelming)
Clarity (sustainability more likely if specific and concrete)
Complexity (sustainability less likely with more complexity of resources)
Fit with local needs (extent to which relevant to school needs and fits the details of school operations)
Continuing technical assistance (availability of refresher and new training, updates on reform model changes, and quality control)

In the framework, the factors influence sustainment not only directly but also indirectly by influencing each other. For example, the Success for All model requires a building-level

facilitator to run the program and provide instructional leadership. In the study the district helped build the capacity of the facilitators by providing monthly training in team building and other skills. That in turn made them more effective leaders within the school, a factor that helped sustain the use of the model.

Because the study is on-going, conclusions and lessons learned are tentative. To date, the study has validated the conceptual framework in explaining the degree to which Success for All was being sustained in the four schools. The researchers are considering turning the framework into a diagnostic or evaluation tool, possibly incorporating a rating or value system to help gauge the degree of sustainment. This is still in the early stages of development.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The experience of these schools shows that whole school reform does not always include students with disabilities. Even when they are included, student assignment often results in a de facto separation from the general population. Very preliminary data suggest the more inclusive the program, the better the students with disabilities are doing.

No single reform model is best for all schools. Because it provides a highly specified program and on-going technical assistance, Success for All proved to be a good match for low-performing schools with high teacher turnover and a lot of beginning teachers.

Schools and teachers sometimes have difficulty integrating the different mandates made on the school. In the study special education teachers often viewed time spent on Success for All as time taken away from working on students' IEPs, rather than identifying how the objectives of the two requirements overlapped.

While what goes on inside the school is important, district policy action that includes strong backing and a strong professional development component can be key to promoting program sustainability.

No one factor provides a "silver bullet" to ensure sustainability. For example, while many focus on the importance of a strong principal, even a weak principal can be successfully shored up by a combination of other factors that support sustaining the reform.

CHALLENGES

Principals and teachers often have little experience incorporating students with disabilities into schoolwide academic-instruction models and are unclear about the legal guidelines for full-inclusion of the two populations. To avoid this barrier, it is important for schools to review the law and policies to make sure everyone on the staff understands the guidelines. Schools should also gather information from model developers about how to include students with disabilities in their specific design.

In choosing a model, schools need to look at the long-term commitments associated with it. For example, Success for All is an expensive program to sustain, requiring several staff positions and frequent replacement of materials.

Districts often mandate low-performing schools embrace a reform model or program without checking whether there are any perceived conflicts between specific models and the regulations and accountability systems of the district. To avoid sending mixed signals to schools, districts

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should review the model against the entire range of district activities and policies and address any perceived inconsistencies.

Over the years, the scripted, repetitious nature of the program can get boring for teachers (and possibly students according to some reports); however, experienced educators are said to adapt the curriculum within the program guidelines to maintain and add interest.

EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Antonio Fierro, Program Director, Texas Reading Initiative, Region 19 Service Center, El Paso, Texas described how professional development in reading has worked in Texas, particularly in meeting the needs of English language learners

The challenge of meeting the needs of *all* learners derived from a statement by then-Governor Bush that "all students will read at grade level or higher by the end of third grade and continue reading at grade level throughout their school years." In addition, the Texas Education Code states that "every student in the state who has a home language other than English and who is identified as limited English proficient shall be provided a full opportunity to participate in a bilingual education or English as a second language program." The governor's statement was translated into the Texas Reading Initiative whose key challenges are to address the following questions:

- How do we get teachers to the point where the goal of all children reading at grade level can be achieved?
- How do children acquire Spanish literacy?
- How do we get our English language learners reading on grade level?

This initiative focuses on children in grades K-2 and their teachers. One way to address the above-listed challenges was to develop assessment tools for the early grades. The Texas Reading initiative was implemented to meet these challenges.

There are some key components involved in implementing the initiative. First, to ensure that all kids read at grade level; second, to make teachers aware and to train them to achieve this goal through the provision of academies. These Teacher Reading Academies are funded by state legislature. (See description below.)

The first component involves ensuring that all children, especially ESL children, are taught through a process of inclusive teaching that combines general education and ESL instruction in the same room. Schools are working on including bilingual education and special education teachers in this process. Principals, directors, and superintendents are also provided training to enable them to participate in this process more effectively.

Three entities came together to establish the academies: Texas Education Agency, statewide initiatives from Region XIII in Texas, and the University of Texas. They brought together three "super trainers" who trained 18 master trainers who trained hundreds of grade-level trainers who trained the thousands of teachers. Scripts were developed to help ensure consistency in the training.

These four-day academies include oral language development, book knowledge, comprehension, listening, alphabetic principles, features of effective instruction, writing, word study, fluency, foundations of reading, spelling, and bilingualism. All these components are research based. One objective is to teach teachers how to ask the right questions. In addition, at the kindergarten level,

the teacher training includes emergent reading skills as opposed to literacy. That is, the training involves oral language development, phonological awareness, and use of learning centers.

Leer Mas (Read More) is another academy for teachers. It is aimed at improving outcomes among low-performing schools, especially those with diverse learners. Specific training is provided for more coverage of issues related to teaching ELL students to read. There are particular strategies for bilingual students, specific to the needs of each grade level. *Leer Mas* and other elements of the reading academies are directed at teaching children who do not speak English as their primary language to read.

Assessment in early grades involves the Texas Primary Reading Inventory and "Tejas Lee" (in Spanish) Early Reading Assessment. This involves testing the student's level of language acquisition, separate from grade level. This arose from the need to develop specific assessment tools for the early grades. Different areas are assessed at different grades. Testing is provided in English and Spanish.

Accelerated Reading Instruction also is provided. Children who continue to struggle get extensive help, including extra sessions and tutoring

In terms of the overall success of this initiative, 17,000 kindergarten, 26,000 first grade, and 26,000 second grade teachers have been trained. The challenge is to implement such a program at the school, district, and state levels. There is a great deal of support and funding from the Texas legislature and a productive partnership of the state education agency and the higher education/research community.

One of the biggest challenges and obstacles faced by this type of program arises out of the intricate differences between Spanish and English, and how to find comparable materials in both languages as the state tries to develop assessments that can be used in both languages.

Other issues discussed pertained to concerns about literacy and bilingual education. On the issue of how to address literacy gaps, Fierro said that middle school teachers who encounter ELL students with literacy gaps use the same materials and strategies, but change the content or context. In addition, there are certain considerations for students who are ELL but are not bilingual. These involve screening to see where the child's development level is. Teachers then change their method of delivery, using the same strategies.

A major challenge is how to implement Texas' strategy when there are 35 languages spoken by students in the education system. Fierro said that Texas seems to focus on getting inside Spanish and meeting the needs of Spanish speakers, such as knowing that Spanish is built on syllables and has few one-syllable words. But in the context of a multitude of other languages, a more creative approach is required.

PRIMARY LITERACY STANDARDS: READING AND WRITING GRADE-BY-GRADE

Judy Aaronson, Deputy Director, Field Services at the National Center on Education and the Economy, America's Choice School Network; Constance Scott, Literacy Coordinator for K-3 at the Charles Young Elementary School, District of Columbia Public Schools; and Pam Ciszewski, Teacher Trainer in Bilingual Education at the Oyster Elementary School, District of Columbia Public Schools, presented an overview of the New Standards Reading and Writing standards for students in kindergarten through third grade.

These standards include standards for Primary-Sound Code, Getting the Meaning, and Reading Habits. For writing, they include Habits and Procedures, Writing Purposes and Resulting Genres, and Language Use and Conventions. The presenters described how these performance standards

are implemented in primary classrooms through rituals and routines that focus on student work and require on-going assessments. The role of a literacy coordinator in the school was clarified, and the roll-out of the program classroom-by-classroom was described

The National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) focuses on standards-based reforms and more specifically on how performance standards are set in the areas of English, mathematics, sciences, and the applied arts. Performance standards are used as criteria for assessing reports for any grade. The establishment of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program in 1998 allowed for various strands of school reform to be pulled together. America's Choice School Design (ACSD) is a comprehensive school reform (CSR) model, which NCEE administers and supports. ACSD centers its program on standards. The workshop session focused on how ACSD relates standards to classroom practices

The strategy in designing America's Choice involves setting benchmarks specific to each grade and development within the grade. Teachers and school administrators are trained to use the benchmarks to set curriculum, instruction, and assessments, and to redesign classroom time and management. The strategy emphasizes literacy and offers a concrete method of teaching and tracking an individual student's progress to standards. ACSD is currently in use in Hawaii and New York.

The desired outcomes of this strategy are that (1) teachers, parents, and students understand the skills and content knowledge required from the students at each grade level, based on clearly articulated standards; (2) students' abilities are recorded and tracked according to the standards; and (3) curriculum and instruction are based on standards.

Key components of this strategy are

- Looking at children's reading and writing, and critically using Primary Literacy Standards (which are graded according to skill and knowledge) as benchmarks
- Using the "sticky notes" strategy to record and track the students' work
- Redesigning classroom time into two-and-one-half-hour literacy blocks with reading, writers' workshop, and skills blocks
- Setting up rituals and routines
- Conducting student-teacher meetings that provide one-on-one assistance to students

This strategy has had some significant impact on student achievement. There is two years of data from schools in New York and Hawaii. Though not every school is showing improvement, there are signs of steady progress and stories of significant improvement. Results vary according to degree of implementation

This strategy requires a new school approach since each student and teacher must undergo the same process for it to work. Teachers must talk to one another about students' achievement and challenges as the students move up a grade.

One of the key lessons learned from this strategy was that ACSD provides a concrete means by which standards are used at the classroom level. It aligns standards with classroom practices and with assessments.

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Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2001

1:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	**CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**	CALVERT FOYER
1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	**IDENTIFYING, IMPLEMENTING, AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS AND STUDENT SUPPORT** Pre-Conference Institute DARREN WOODRUFF, Technical Assistance Coordinator EMSTAC, American Institutes for Research	CALVERT BALLROOM, SALON E
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	**STATE TEAM PLANNING SESSION I:** [Focus: Self Assessment: state capacity to help low performing schools]. *(Refer to conference binder Section I for room assignments)* *All state and district meeting participants should attend this planning session.*	
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS** CINDY BROWN, DIRECTOR Resource Center on Educational Equity, CCSSO PATRICE LINEHAN, POLICY ANALYST The Policymaker Partnership at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education ARTHUR W. GOSLING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform RICHARD STEINKE, DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT Maryland State Department of Education JOE A. HAIRSTON, SUPERINTENDENT Baltimore County Schools CARMEN RUSSO, CEO, Baltimore City Public School System	CALVERT BALLROOM
6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	**CONFERENCE RECEPTION**	CALVERT BALLROOM
	DINNER ON YOUR OWN *(Refer to conference binder for list of restaurants)*	

MONDAY, MAY 21, 2001

7:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. **REGISTRATION** — CALVERT FOYER

7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST** — MEZZANINE LEVEL

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. **PLENARY SESSION: WHAT WORKS IN LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS?** — CALVERT BALLROOM

WARREN SIMMONS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Annenberg Institute for School Reform

AMANDA DATNOW, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
University of Toronto, Canada

MICHAEL WILLIAMSON, DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT
Michigan Department of Education

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

STATE ACTIONS TO SUPPORT LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

VERSAILLES ROOM
Kentucky
Johnnie Grissom
Associate Commissioner, Office of Special Instructional Services
Tom Peterson
Associate Commissioner, Office of Leadership and School Improvement

SALON C
North Carolina
Marvin Pittman
Senior Assistant to the State Superintendent
Elsie Leak
Director of School Improvement

ROYALE BOARD ROOM
Nevada
Terry Owens
Evaluation Consultant
Jackie Moore
Title I Consultant

THE ROLE OF DISTRICTS IN SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENTS IN LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

CHESAPEAKE
Cincinnati
Kathleen Ware
Associate Superintendent, Cincinnati Public Schools

SALON B
Chula Vista
Libia Gil
Superintendent, Chula Vista Elementary School District, California

SALON E
Brazosport
Doug Boone
Principal, Brazosport High School

11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. **STATE TEAM PLANNING SESSION II**
(Refer to conference binder section I for room assignments)

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. **LUNCHEON** — CALVERT BALLROOM

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Keynote Speaker

ANTHONY AMATO, SUPERINTENDENT
Hartford Public Schools

2: 00 p.m. - 3:20 p.m. **CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS: TOOLS FOR LEVERAGING CHANGE**

DATA RETREATS

VERSAILLES ROOM
Susan Grady
Director, Content and Learning Team
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Scott Jones
Associate Director, Center for Data Systems and Development, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

DATA BASED DECISION-MAKING

SALON E
Steve Hamilton
Director, District and School Services
Learning Innovations at WestEd

USING DATA WITH PARENTS

SALON B
Bev Raimondo
Director, Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, The Prichard Committee

DATA DRIVEN IMPROVEMENT IN LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

ROYALE BOARD ROOM
Joe DiMartino
Director, Student Centered Learning
The Education Alliance, LAB at Brown University
Patti Smith
Research and Development Specialist
The Education Alliance, LAB at Brown University

INCREASING CLASSROOM PRODUCTION, NOT INCREASING THE BUDGET IS THE SECRET TO INCREASING STUDENT LEARNING

CHESAPEAKE
John Hollingsworth
President, DataWorks Educational Research

3:20 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. **BREAK** MEZZANINE LEVEL

3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. **OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUES: TEACHER RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND DEVELOPMENT** CALVERT BALLROOM

KATI HAYCOCK
Executive Director, Education Trust

4:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m **CONCURRENT SESSIONS: EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES**

SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP TO PREPARE OUTSTANDING RESPONSIVE TEACHERS (SUPPORT) FOR LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

SALON E

John Lee
Director, Urban Teacher Education
University of Maryland Baltimore County

TRAINING TEACHERS TO WORK WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

SALON C

David Ramirez
Executive Director, Center for Language Minority Education and Research

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: SIX ESSENTIALS OF WHOLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

VERSAILLES Ballroom

Mary Nash
Principal, Mary Lyons, K-8 Model School-Cluster Leader, Boston Public Schools, Public Education Fund, Boston

Richard Martin
Boston Planning for Excellence in the Public School

DINNER ON YOUR OWN

SPECIAL EDUCATION APPROACHES

ROYALE BOARD ROOM

Diane Bryant
Project Director, Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE

CHESAPEAKE

Kathy Witherup
Cincinnati Public Schools

Eleanor Dougherty
The Education Trust

7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	**REGISTRATION**	CALVERT FOYER
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	**BREAKFAST BUFFET**	CALVERT BALLROOM
8:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.	**OVERVIEW OF SITE VISIT PROCESS**	CALVERT BALLROOM
	CYNTHIA REEVES High Poverty Schools Initiative, CCSSO	
8:15 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	**TRAVEL TIME** [Buses leave in front of building - West Baltimore Street]	

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. **SITE VISITS TO SCHOOLS**

11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. **TRAVEL TIME**

12:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. **LUNCH AND SITE VISIT DE-BRIEFING** CALVERT BALLROOM

GARY THRIFT
Area Executive Officer
Direct Instruction Area
Baltimore City Schools

LIN CASSELL
Title 1 Coordinator
Baltimore County Public Schools

ANNE CARUSI
Area Executive Officer
Southern Area
Baltimore City Schools

NOLA CROMER
Title 1 Supervisor
Baltimore County Public Schools

2:45 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. **CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS: INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION:**

EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

SALON B

Greg Tolbert
Executive Director
Kendrick Meekins
Director of Operations, Boys and Girls Club of Metro Spartanburg
Carol Gardner
Assistant Superintendent, Spartanburg County Schools District #7

DOUBLE OAKS PRE-KINDERGARTEN AND FAMILY RESOURCES CENTER

CHESAPEAKE

Susan Agruso
Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Accountability

Cheryl Merritt
Principal, Double Oaks Pre-Kindergarten and Family Resources Center, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATION

ROYALE BOARD ROOM

Jane Quinn
Children's Aid Society
MARTA RODRIGUEZ REVERA
Children's Aid Society

TITLE I AND IDEA COLLABORATION: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND COMMON CHALLENGES

SALON E

Joanne Cashman
The Policymakers Partnership, National Association of State Directors of Special Education
Johnnie Grissom
Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education
Bob Harmon
Title I/Learning Assistance Director
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction - Washington State
Alexa Pochowski
Director of Special Education, Kansas State Department of Education

4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. **STATE PLANNING SESSION III: OPTIONAL**

DINNER ON YOUR OWN

(Refer to conference binder for list of restaurants)

7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST** — MEZZANINE LEVEL

STATE TEAM LEADERS MEETING WITH CCSSO STAFF — ROYALE CONFERENCE FOYER

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. **CONCURRENT SESSIONS LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

STRATEGIC READING: A BALANCED LITERACY PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

SALON C

Alta Shaw
Senior Instructional Facilitator, Talent Development Middle and High School Programs
Christine Snee
Instructional Facilitator and Curriculum Coach Talent Development High School Program

SALON D

Mark Forget
MAX Teaching with Reading and Writing

IMPLEMENTING COMPREHENSIVE REFORM INCLUSIVE OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

SALON A

Sofia Aburto
Senior Research Associate, Northern California Comprehensive Assistance Center, WestEd
Sandra Traback
Principal
Patty Brekke
Resource Teacher

WHAT SUCCESS FOR ALL TEACHERS SAY ABOUT INCLUSION AND SUSTAINMENT

ROYALE BOARD ROOM

Susanna Purnell
National Association of State Boards of Education

EARLIER LITERACY DEVELOPMENT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

SALON E

Antonio Fierro
Program Director, Texas Reading Initiative, Region 19 Service Center, El Paso, Texas

PRIMARY LITERACY STANDARDS: READING AND WRITING GRADE-BY-GRADE

CHESAPEAKE

Judy Aaronson
Deputy Director for Field Services at the National Center on Education and the Economy America's Choice Schools Network

10:15 a.m. - 11:00 a.m **PLENARY SESSION** CALVERT BALLROOM
PUTTING IT TOGETHER: LITERACY INSTRUCTION

M. Susan Burns, Associate Professor
George Mason University

11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. **CHECK-OUT BREAK**

11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. **PEER CONSULTATION**
[States teams will be asked to share their preliminary plans to help low performing schools and solicit advice from peers in other states.]

(Refer to conference binder section I for room assignments)

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. **LUNCH AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS** CALVERT BALLROOM

JOSEPH F. JOHNSON, Director,
Office of Compensatory Education
U.S. Department of Education

2:00 p.m. **CLOSING REMARKS**

CYNTHIA G. BROWN, Director
Council of Chief State School Officers

JULIA LARA, Assistant Director
Council of Chief State School Officers

Appendix B: Speaker Bios

Scott Jones

Dr. Scott Jones is currently NCREL's Associate Director overseeing the Center for Data systems and Development. In this position, Dr. Jones directs the laboratory's efforts in the research on how districts and schools use data to improve the education of all students. Prior to this, he was in the state of Wisconsin, where he assisted in the development and coordination of "data retreats" throughout the state. He has facilitated data retreats at school, district, and state levels.

Gregg Tolbert

Greg Tolbert has been Executive Director of Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Spartanburg for 4.5 years. He was a Chartered Public Accountant with Coopers & Lybrand and Ernst & Young for 5 years prior to entering the non-profit field. He has twin 5 year-old sons and one lovely wife.

Kendrick Meekins

Kendrick Meekins, Director of Operations of Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro of Spartanburg, has been with the organization for 4 years. He has a bacherlor's degree from the Education University of South Carolina Spartanburg. He supervises 6 school-based Clubs and 15 school-based homework assistance centers.

Carol Gardner

Carol Garner holds a B.A. from Florida State in English Literature, an M.A. from Western Carolina in Middle Grades Education, and a PhD from USC - Columbia in Educational Leadership. She has two sons and two perfect grandchildren. She enjoys reading trashy novels, traveling, being on the lake - none of which I get to do because she works, works, works! Has been and continues to be a lifelong educator with not much hope of changing.

Kathleen T. Ware

Kathleen Ware has served on the top management team for the Cincinnati Public Schools for ten years. She is responsible for strategic planning, curriculum and instruction, program evaluation, grants, vocational education, early childhood, comprehensive school reform, and teacher quality. She and the president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers co-chaired the committee that developed Cincinnati's new teacher evaluation system and compensation plan.

AMANDA DATNOW

Amanda Datnow is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theory & Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. She is a graduate of the UCLA Graduate School of Education and was formerly an Associate Research Scientist at the Center for Social Organization in Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Her research focuses on the politics and policies of school reform, particularly with regard to the professional lives of teachers and issues of equity. She is currently conducting federally funded research studies on the implementation of externally developed school reform models. Recent publications include "Power and politics in the adoption of school reform models" in *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* (Winter, 2000). "Teachers' responses to Success for All: How beliefs, experiences, and adaptations shape implementation" in *American Educational Research Journal* (Fall, 2000), and *The Gender Politics of Educational Change* (1998, Falmer Press).

JOSEPH DIMARTINO

Joseph DiMartino's successful role in developing The Education Alliance's secondary school restructuring initiative has placed The Education Alliance at the center of the national discussion on high school reinvention. He led The Education Alliance's efforts to pursue the difficult area of high school reform through his understanding of the teaching and learning process and how students, especially those from diverse backgrounds, master high levels of academic proficiency.

For more than a decade, Mr. DiMartino has been known as Rhode Islands's foremost advocate for improving educational outcomes for diverse learners. As chairman of Rhode Island's state advisory council for English language learners, and as education advocate in the Office of the Child Advocate for Rhode Island, he has approached the task of student-centered learning from the perspective of parental expectations and student capabilities. His in-depth experience as an educational advocate for special needs students in Rhode Island has deepened his understanding of complex learning patterns and strategies.

Mr. DiMartino's reputation as a strong voice in national discussions regarding high school reform is well earned, and has resulted in his participation on the National forum on the High School. His continuing passionate advocacy for student-centered leaning in high school settings makes him an invaluable member of The Education Alliance's national initiatives. A doctoral candidate at Brown University, his studies in educational policy add a critical perspective to his work

PATTI SMITH

Patti Smith, Ed.D is a Research and Development Specialist at the Education Alliance at Brown University where she is involved with Student Centered Learning, specifically assisting districts and schools with implementing the Breaking Ranks model for high school reform. She is the executive director of Side Youth Leadership Service-Learning Program Teachers' Studio at Sunbridge College in NY. She has been a school designer for Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound and has taught kindergarten, middle school, and post secondary students. She is the author of *More Lifeways*, a book on family life in the 1900's, *Taking a Risk in Education: Waldorf Inspired Public Schools* and *Urban Waldorf: A day in the Life of an Urban Public School*, both documentary films about educational innovations.

BEVERLY N. RAIMONDO

As Director of the Commonwealth Institute for Paren Leadership. Beverly N. Raimondo is responsible for the Prichard Committee for academic Excellence's "umbrella" for all the committee's parent and community engagement initiatives. The Prichard committee, a citizen's advocacy group, works to improve the education of all Kentuckians. She created and now manages the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. This is a process by which parents receive skills, information, and their school's achievement data, along with recognition and motivation, to work within their schools or districts to engage more parents in work that improves student achievement. A native of Lexington, KY she is a graduate of the University of Kentucky with a BS in Education and a MSLS. She joined the Prichard Committee in 1991 after a career at IBM that included management and employee development.

SUE GRADY

Sue Grady is currently serving as the director of the Content and Learning Team, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. As director, Sue is responsible for providing leadership to the general education consultants who are part of this team, creating connections between academic content standards and assessment, and serving on the agency's Accountability for School Improvement team. In addition, Sue coordinates the department's activities with the standards and assessment centers located in each of Wisconsin's twelve intermediate education agencies. Sue has lead data retreats ranging from single school, to multi-school, and multi-state.

SOFIA ABURTO

Sofia Aburto is a Senior Research Associate with WestEd's Northern California Comprehensive Assistance Center in Oakland, specializing in the areas of data-based inquiry and services for English language learners within the context of school reform. Ms. Aburto has participated in a number of research studies examining the impact of federal funding on services for language minority students and has assisted numerous schools and districts in conceptualizing, developing, and implementing assessment and evaluation systems for the purpose of improving services for English language learners. She recently served as Deputy Director of a national research study of schools receiving Title VII Comprehensive School grants (funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs). At the state level, she has assisted California Department of Education staff in providing technical assistance to schools and districts serving English language learners and in selecting outstanding bilingual programs and practices for exemplary status. She has experience in case study and report writing, computerized data management, and statistical analysis of national, district, and school data sets.

JOHN Y. LEE

Dr. John Y. Lee is the Director of the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Urban Teacher Education (UTE) and School-University Partnership to Prepare Outstanding Responsive Teachers (SUPPORT) Project. The UTE recruits, prepares, supports, and retains high-quality teachers for Maryland's highest-need schools, while the SUPPORT Project establishes PreK-university partnerships, conducts and disseminates research on teacher quality and school reform to help shape legislation and funding for Maryland's high-need schools. Both UTE and

SUPPORT have received funding from federal, state, and local educational agencies and foundations for their innovative programs and critical acclaim for their data-driven approach to reforming PreK-12 schools and teacher preparation. Dr. Lee's research and policy work focus on teacher staffing patterns in low versus high need schools, improving teacher and school effectiveness, and comprehensive school reform approaches to reducing the minority achievement gap.

JOHN HOLLINGSWORTH

John Hollingsworth assembled a one-of-a-kind team of educators and computer programers that became DataWorks Educational Research to collect, analyze, and use real student data to drive educational reform to improve student achievement.

DataWorks has analyzed student achievement data for 400,000 students at 600 schools, has collected and calibrated for alignment to standards 150,000 samples of student work, has conducted 1,400 classroom observations, and administered these findings and put together "The Targeted Improvement Model (TIM)." This model is being used as an external evaluation process for forty California Underperforming or Federal Program Improvement schools to design a multi-year Action Plan for Improving student academic achievement.

DataWorks Educational Research has trained 5,000 teachers and administrators throughout California in a process called "The DataWorks Productivity Index." This index coalesces four teacher behavior variables: Time on Task, Content Alignment to Standards, Breadth of Content Coverage, and Teacher Effectiveness.

DataWorks Educational Research developed "The DataWorks Principles For Looking At Student Work." These principles determine curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices through the lens of student work. This process is being used by administrators to determine quality of instructional methodologies.

DataWorks Educational Research is collaborating with many statewide agencies such as the S4 Regional Support & Improvement Centers and the California State Leadership Academies to train teachers and administrators in data analysis, examination of student work, and effective instructional practices.

DataWorks Educational Research has also published various research papers including "Achievement in Underperforming Schools," "Curriculum Calibration," and "Equity and Equality in Education." Recently, some of these articles have been included in the California State Department of Education's reform documents. DataWorks' most recent book, *Multiple Measures, Accurate Ways to Assess Student Achievement*, was published last spring by Corwin Press. This part fall, DataWorks was one of eight researchers selected to present at the High Performing, High Poverty Schools symposium in Sacramento, CA.

LIBIA S. GIL

Dr. Libia S. Gil was appointed to the Superintendency of the Chula Vista Elementary School District in August 1993. During her tenure, the District has experienced continuous growth and is currently serving 23,300 students in thirty-seven schools. Dr. Gil has fostered the successful implementation of numerous school change models including five charter schools and partnerships with Edison Schools Inc., and School Futures Research Foundation, accelerated Schools, Comer, and Standards-Based Instruction. In 1998, the community passed a $95 million

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school bond with a 76 percent voters' approval to support modernization of learning environments.

Dr. Gil began her teaching career in the Los Angeles Unified School District and has taught in various programs, including English as a Second Language and Gifted and Talented programs. During her teaching experiences, she and her colleagues created a successful K-12 alternative school and numerous alternative classroom programs. She has held a variety of administrative positions including elementary school principal in the ABC School District and Area Administrator and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for the Seattle Public Schools. Dr. Gil has a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Washington.

ALTA H. SHAW

Alta H. Shaw is a senior instructional facilitator for the *Talent Development Middle and High School Programs* at the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Ms. Shaw has a master's degree in Organizational Development from Johns Hopkins University and an advanced certificate in the field of Reading/English Language Arts. As a teacher of secondary students for 18 years, Ms. Shaw has combined her knowledge of organizational change and language arts instruction to assist schools around the country with the successful implementation of school-wide reform initiatives such as *Success for all and Talent Development* for over 14 years. As the co-developer of the *Strategic Reading Program*, a balanced literacy approach for "challenged 9th graders readers," Ms. Shaw currently participates in training, mentoring of teachers, and collaborative efforts with district and school administrators and staff.

WARREN SIMMONS

Warren Simmons directs the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. The Institute was established in 1993 to generate, share and act on knowledge that improves conditions and outcomes in American schools, particularly in urban areas and in schools serving disadvantaged students. The Institute pursues its mission through five strands of work: Leadership, Rethinking Accountability, District Redesign, School/Community Partnerships and Comprehensive School Reform. In each of these areas, the Institute conducts applied research, provides professional development, and offers technical assistance designed to illuminate, share and extend promising practices.

Prior to joining the Institute, Dr. Simmons headed the Philadelphia Education Fund, a nonprofit organization that helped the School District of Philadelphia fund, develop and implement new academic standards, content-based professional development, standards-based curriculum resources, and comprehensive school reform as part of the *Children Achieving* reform agenda.

Over his twenty-year career in education, Dr. Simmons has held a variety of positions, including Senior Associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, where he developed and funded initiatives on community development and urban school reform. He also served as Director of Equity Initiatives for the New Standards Project, a coalition of 17 states and 6 school districts that designed a performance-based examination system to drive curricular and instructional reforms. In addition to his work on national and state education reform initiatives, Warren served as special assistant to the superintendent of schools in Prince George's County, Maryland, where he planned and/or implemented district wide initiatives on improving the achievement of disadvantaged students; these included the Comer School Development Project, the College

Board's Equity 2000 Project, and the school system's multicultural education and Black male achievement initiatives.

Dr. Simmons received his B.A. in psychology from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and earned a doctorate in psychology from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. He serves on boards and advisory groups of numerous education reform initiatives including the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, the Clark Foundation's Program on Student Achievement, the Merck Institute, the National Research Council's Board on International Comparative Studies in Education, Educating Children for Parenting, the Public Education Fund Network, the Disney Learning Partnership, the Grammy Foundation, the Wallace/Readers Digest funds' Leaders Count Initiative and the Toyota Family Literacy Initiative.

STEPHENS C. HAMILTON

Steve Hamilton provides technical assistance, program evaluation, research and dissemination of information to schools, state agencies, and institutions of higher education in the New England region. He currently serves as the coordinator of Maine education in the New England region and as the coordinator of Maine and Vermont for the New England Comprehensive Assistance Center at Education Development Center, Inc. providing support to state personnel, LEAs and schools planning or implementing school wide initiatives.

Steve's work as a program evaluator includes primary responsibility for the evaluation of a three-year National Science Foundation teacher enhancement initiative. He has also helped with the development of evaluation instruments for a variety of other programs. Research projects have included reviews of practices related to teacher portfolios, state teacher certification and new teacher licensure.

As an elementary principal, Steve worked with University of Vermont faculty coordinating "in-school lab experiences" and seminars for elementary pre-service teachers. He currently serves as an elected school committee member in his local community.

DOUG BOONE

Doug Boone is the principal of Brazosport High School. He has been an educator for thirty-three years, teaching and coaching for twenty-one of them. He attended Lamar University on a track scholarship where he qualified for the 1968 Olympic Trials. Due to a tragic plane crash of his coach and several fellow team members he did not pursue his Olympic dreams.

He was an intermediate (grades 7 & 8) assistant principal for five years before becoming the principal of Brazosport High School. That was the year the school received a formal warning from the Texas Education Agency because of low achievement the previous year. The school has 1100 students. At Brazosport 60% of the students are on free and reduced lunch, 48% are Hispanic, and 13% are Afro American. There is a mobility rate of 28.5%.

During Doug's first year every ethnic group's achievement rose to70% or more and the school received a **Recognized** rating by the state. Attendance improved to 94.4% and the dropout rate was reduced from nearly 7% to less 1%. Achievement has continued to soar. The 1999-2000 test results showed that 98% of all students passed the math and writing tests and 97% passed the reading. The dropout rate is still below 1% in every category. The school received an **Exemplary** rating by the state. Doug gives the credit to his great staff of child-centered educators, expecting a no excuses attitude for these remarkable results.

JUDY AARONSON

Judy Aaronson is Deputy Director for Field Services at the National Center on Education and the Economy, where she coordinates support services for the America's Choice Schools Network. Her career in the District of Columbia Public Schools spanned 30 years and included service as a classroom teacher, staff developer and curriculum specialist. Her final position before joining the NCEE was as director of the school system's Department of Teaching and Learning, where she was responsible for curriculum and staff development.

ANTHONY S. AMATO

Anthony Amato was appointed the Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools by the state Board of Trustees in April of 1999. Mr. Amato immediately began implementing a district-wide reorganization of the Hartford school district that has consistently been ranked the lowest performing school system in Connecticut. His areas of focus included curriculum reform in numeracy, literacy, parent empowerment and technology. In January 2000, Hartford Public Schools announced that the results of the statewide mastery tests had surged ahead more this year than in the four previous years combined.

Superintendent Amato's reforms go well beyond test scores. He has instituted a series of programs and curricula reform that place Hartford Public Schools on the path of excellence. In his first year, Amato opened up forty-four pre-K classes to city children, created the first Parent Power Institute to train parents in valuable parenting and job skills and implemented spring and summer "power" schools supported by over 70 non-profit organizations, corporations and government agencies. He is known nationally for bridging the "digital divide" by making technology accessible to communities. His laptop program, which is presently being used in the Hartford Schools, is the same program he developed in District 6 and is considered the largest in the nation. Amato's current vision is to provide every family in the city with a personal digital computer as well as free Internet connectivity in the next two years. Amato has also sought to raise the profile of public education and expand confidence and support of school programs and activities through strategic public communications.

Prior to coming to Hartford, Mr. Amato was Superintendent for District 6 in New York City. The district has a population of over 30,000 students and includes the Washington Heights and North Harlem sections of Manhattan. At the time of Mr. Amato's appointment to that post in 1987, the district had been the lowest performing district in the city. Within the first few years of his tenure, Mr. Amato lifted test scores and overall academic performance up from the bottom. Upon his departure twelve years later, District 6 ranked in the middle third among all school districts in New York City.

Mr. Amato holds Masters degrees in Bilingual Education and Educational Administration from City College. He is presently a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Columbia University Teachers College.

SUSANNA PURNELL

Susanna Purnell is a Senior Project Associate with the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). She directs a four-year project that is examining the sustainment of comprehensive school reform through a cross-site analysis of four schools using *Success for All*. The first report of the project, *Implementing Reform: What Success for All Teaches* Us about

Including Students with Disabilities in Comprehensive School Restructuring, has just been released. She also has staffed two NASBE study groups examining alternatives to social promotion and retention, and addressing social issues in schools of the 21st century.

KATI HAYCOCK

Kati Haycock is one of the nation's leading child advocates in the field of Education.

She currently serves as Director of The Education Trust. Established in 1992, the Trust does what no other Washington-based education organization seeks to do: speaks up for what's right for young people, especially those who are poor or members of minority groups. The Trust also provides hands-on assistance to urban school districts and universities that want to work together to improve student achievement, kindergarten through college.

Before coming to The Education Trust, Haycock served as Executive Vice President of the Children's Defense Fund, the nation's largest child advocacy.

ALEXA POCHOWSKI

As of June 2nd, 2001, Alexa Pochowski will become the Kansas Assistant Commissioner of Education. Since July 1999, she has been the State Director of Special Education with the Kansas State Department of Education. Alexa has a Ph.D. in Educational Administration with a minor in special education, and a M.S. in behavioral disabilities. She has taught students with learning disabilities at the elementary level and students with behavior disorders at both the middle and high school levels.

For the two years prior to KSDE, Alexa was the Director of Special Education for the Shawnee Mission School District. In 1999, she was honored by the Shawnee Mission administrators as the District Administrator of the Year. In addition, she was recently honored with the "Friends of Children" award by the Children's Alliance of Kansas.

Prior to moving to Kansas, Alexa served as a director of special education in cooperative educational service agencies in both Wisconsin and Illinois. For nine years, she worked at Research and Training Associates (RTA) as a researcher, consultant and technical assistance provider under multiple U.S. Department of Education Title I contracts. In this capacity, she provided on-site assistance to staff, parents and community members at the school, district, state and federal levels. The mission of the technical assistance center was to support effective instruction and to facilitate the provision of appropriate services for at-risk students and students with special educational needs.

In addition, Alexa serves as an adjunct professor at KU, teaching an intercollaborative teaming course and effective instructional methods and strategies for diverse learners. She and her husband and son have lived in Overland Park, Kansas for the past 12 years. They share mutual allegiances to the Packers, Bears and Chiefs!

JOHNNIE MCLAUGHLIN GRISSOM

Since 1994, Dr. Johnnie McLaughlin Grissom has been the Associate Commissioner, Office of Special Instructional Services, at the Kentucky Department of Education. Johnnie has an Ed. D.

with a major in Educational Administration, and an M.A. Ed., with a major in English and a minor in Gifted Education.

Prior to moving to Kentucky, Johnnie was actively involved for over ten years in various capacities in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction - ranging from Director of the Division for Student Services to Deputy Director of the Division for Exceptional Children, to Program Planning Consultant for the South Central Regional Education Center.

For about five years, Johnnie taught English and Social Studies at the secondary level, and was the Director of Programs for Exceptional Children at the Red Springs City Schools, North Carolina. She also served for a year as Adjunct Instructor at Kentucky State University. She is a recipient of the 1993-94 Administrator of the Year award by the Department of Public Instruction Association of Educational Office Professionals and a recipient of the Algernon Sidney Sullivan Award for Excellence in Academic Performance and Community Service (1972).

In addition to being a member of several community services and organizations, Johnnie has a range of eclectic interests - she enjoys crossword puzzles, books on cassettes, and mentoring youth.

BOB HARMON

Bob Harmon holds both bachelors and masters degrees from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. Serving in the various roles of secondary math teacher, high school principal, and central office administrator, Bob has been involved with the Title I program at the building, district, and state level, beginning in August 1983. As a local district program director, he was a member of the Title I/Learning Assistance Program (LAP) Committee of Practitioners — a state-level advisory group. He has held the position of State Title I Director since July 1999. Bob supports school districts in all areas related to the Federal Title I and the State Learning Assistance Program, especially district allocations, program and budget approvals and revisions, (visit WebApps at http://www.k12.wa.us) and program improvement. His work includes coordination with activities of the governor-appointed Academic Achievement and Accountability through the state legislature, and implementing a statewide accountability process that is compatible with Title I requirements. The Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission website is http://www.k12.wa.us/accountability.

DIANE PEDROTTY BRYANT

Diane Pedrotty Bryant is an associate professor in the department of special education at The University of Texas at Austin. She serves as the secondary goal director for the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts in the College of Education, and the Project Director for the Special Education Reading Project for the Texas Education Agency, Division of Special Education. Her research interests include studying the effectiveness of instructional interventions for literacy, mathematics, and technology for students with disabilities and dyslexia.

JACQUELYN MOORE

Jacquelyn Moore has taught high school English for 30 years in Berwyn, Illinois, Cherry Creek, Coloradom Fairbanks, Alaska, and Las Vega, Nevada. She served in Las Vegas as department chair, AP teacher, and IB Coordinator.

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In 1998, she moved from Las Vegas to Carson City to become the Language Arts/Fine Arts Coordinator for the Nevada Department of Education. She currently serves as one of five Nevada Department of Education Title I Coordinators and also as State Coordinator for the Goals 2000, Homeless Education, and AP Incentive grants.

MARVIN PITTMAN

Marvin R. Pittman is Senior Assistant to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In this role, Mr. Pittman represents the State Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent on boards and meetings and provides leadership for statewide educational initiatives and educational reform. He has provided statewide leadership in the areas of developing student accountability standards and closing student achievement gaps.

Marvin has worked as a Behavior Analyst for the Wake County Juvenile Court System, a mathematics and science teacher, an assistant principal, principal, Director of Instruction for the Wake County Public Schools in Raleigh, North Carolina, and an Executive Assistant at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. He also worked as Executive Director for Middle and High School Instructional Outcomes for Durham Public Schools. In this role, Mr. Pittman supervised and evaluated middle and high school principals and was responsible for the middle and high school programs in the Durham district. He has also served as a Section Chief in the Division of School Improvement with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction where he was directly involved with major educational reform in North Carolina.

Marvin and two colleagues developed a cultural diversity-training program for North Carolina public school educators. Components of the training program have been used in many North Carolina schools. Mr. Pittman chaired the Durham Public Schools Charter Education Task Force and was intimately involved in the implementation of character education throughout that district. He has delivered cultural diversity, character education, middle school development and leadership development training across North Carolina and other states.

Mr. Pittman was educated in eastern North Carolina. He graduated from George Washington Carver High School in Pinetops, North Carolina and enrolled in North Carolina Wesleyan College in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, where he received a B.S. degree in Mathematics Education. He has done graduate study at North Carolina State University and North Carolina Central University.

Marvin is a member of Compassionate Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C. where he serves as Sunday school Superintendent. He is married to Earnestine Dancy Pittman, who is an assistant principal in the Wake County Public Schools Raleigh, N.C. He has two daughters, Ebony, who is a law student at NC Central University in Durham, N.C. and Marva, who is a student in the Wake County Public School System.

MICHAEL WILLIAMSON

Michael Williamson is Deputy Superintendent for Education Services for the Michigan Department of Education. Education Services units within the Michigan Department of Education provide support and assistance to local schools in their endeavors to raise pupil achievement. Education Services units include: Professional Preparation; School Excellence; Special Education; Field Services; Education Options, Charters and Choice; and the Michigan

Schools for the Deaf and Blind. Previously, Dr. Williamson served as Director of the State Board of Education office where he worked on issues of education policy and school reform.

Prior to his service with the Michigan Department of Education, Dr. Williamson served for 15 years as a district superintendent where he lead successful efforts for school improvement and school reform. He served in a rural, a suburban, and an urban school district. He has also served as a school business manager, a high school social science teacher and department chair, and a university research consultant.

Dr. Williamson has written and presented locally and nationally on topics of education policy, school operations, and education reform. He has periodically served at Michigan universities as an adjunct faulty member. He has a B.A. in History and Secondary Education from Adams State College, an M.A. in Counseling, and a doctorate in Leadership from Michigan University.

Throughout his career, Dr. Williamson has provided leadership and service to a number of community and professional organizations with a mission to improve education and to build quality of life in communities. He currently serves as President of the Deputies Leadership Council of the Council of Chief State School Officers, as an appointed Commissioner and member of the steering committee for the Education Commission of the States, a board member of the Partnership for Learning, and represents the Michigan Dept. of Education on various boards and committees.

ELSIE CURETON LEAK

Elsie Leak is a native of Spartanburg, South Carolina. She received her bachelor's degree from South Carolina State University, her master's degree from Atlanta University, and her doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

She has had a long, successful career in education: classroom teacher at the elementary, middle, high school, and college levels, science department chair, science and math supervisor, director of elementary education and director of middle and secondary education. Dr. Leak has also served as a principal at the middle and high school levels. Prior to accepting her current position at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, she served as Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Outcomes and Interim Deputy Superintendent for Durham Public Schools.

She has been the recipient of many honors and awards that include "Wachovia Principal of the Year". She was Candidate for "Teacher of the Year" and "Administrator of the Year" for the Educational Office Personnel Organization.

She is a member of several civic and service organizations. A few of them include Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Phi Delta Kappa, the American Association of School Administrators and the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. Dr. Leak also holds memberships on several boards.

CHERYL MERRITT

Cheryl G. Merritt, M.Ed is principal of Double Oaks Pre-Kindergarten and Family Resource Center since its opening in 1997-98. Prior to this, Ms. Merritt has served as an Exceptional Children's Teacher and Assistant Principal in two K-5 schools as well as Principal in one K-5 school before coming to Double Oaks.

Cheryl Merritt received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and her Master of Education degree from the North Carolina State University. Ms. Merritt is a member of the North Carolina Association of Educators and the National Education Association.

TERESA M. OWENS

Dr. Owens currently holds three Nevada educational licenses: Elementary Education, Music Education, and Educational Administration. She earned a B.A. in Music Education in 1975, an M.Ed. and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration in 1993 and 2000, respectively. She taught music education and elementary classroom for nine years, and acted as a dean of students and substitute principal before taking a position at the Nevada Department of Education in late 1996.

Her job responsibilities at the Department include working with low-performing schools in Nevada. Dr. Owens assists schools with plans for improvement and applications for state funding. She is the project manager of 30 state grants to low-performing schools totaling $3.3 million for school year 2000-2001, and is looking forward to increased funding of $5.7 million for the coming school year serving approximately 80 schools.

She has presented on accountability issues at numerous conferences and workshops within the state of Nevada. In March, 2001, she presented on the subject of state interventions of low-performing schools at the ASCD conference held in Boston.

MARY C. NASH

Dr. Nash has been a teacher, supervisor, special education administrator and now principal, in the Boston Public School system for almost 25 years. Known for her strong commitment to all children, but especially those with emotional, behavioral and psychiatric challenges, Mary almost single-handedly conceptualized, developed and now is the principal of the Mary Lyon Model Elementary School in Brighton, MA.

Opened in 1992, the Mary Lyon School is the first school in the country to fully integrate students with severe behavioral and emotional problems into regular education classrooms. Under Mary's strong leadership, the school has been recognized as a professional development site for master's level training in special education and social work through Wheelock College and Boston College. Mary is also an adjunct faculty member at Wheelock College. The Mary Lyon School was chosen as a 21st Century Lead School by the Boston Plan for Excellence and the Annenberg Foundation.

J. DAVID RAMIREZ

J. David Ramirez is a former teacher, counselor, and school psychologist. He received his Ph.D. in child development from Stanford University in 1982, with a specialty in program evaluation. His program, evaluation, and research experience spans several areas, including: child development/state preschool, migrant education, bilingual education; alcohol and other drug use prevention, community college, adult literacy, tuition guarantee, special education, job training/youth employment, community involvement, juvenile justice systems, seasonal agricultural workers, and U.S. foreign aid technical training programs for Central and South American countries. He works with student, parent, and community groups as well as staff from

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local, county, state, and federal education and non-education agencies within the United States, Central and South America, China, and Africa. He is a specialist in the design and evaluation of education programs for language-minority students.

Currently, Dr. Ramirez is the Director for the Center for Language Minority Education and Research, California State University of Long Beach. The Center's goals address program development, professional development, evaluation/research, and policy analysis related to language minority issues. Projects under way include: Multifunctional Resource Center-13, providing technical assistance to school districts in Los Angeles and Orange counties; Educational Services for Cambodian and Hmong students, preparing a book of articles by researchers and practitioners regarding program and policy implications for the design and implementation of appropriate instruction services for these students; Home-School Institute providing training and technical assistance to develop and maintain collaboration among language minority parents, teachers, and school site administrators; Assessment Guidelines, developing a handbook for teachers and administrators for designing and implementing accountability services for limited English proficient students on behalf of the California Department of Education; Immigrant Education, designing, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive program for serving middle and high school age immigrant students, with a special concern for late-entrants; and Pre-School Education, conducting a study of the effectiveness of primary language preschool programs.

RICHARD MARTIN

Richard Martin is the author of Modulations and Negation of Beautiful Words. His poems have appeared in the anthologies: Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Café' and American Poets Say Goodbye to the 21st Century. He is the Coach Support Coordinator for the Boston Plan for Excellence-Boston Annenberg Challenge and a change coach in the Boston Public Schools.

MARTA RODRIGUEZ-RIVERA

Marta Rodriguez-Rivera received her Masters Degree in Social Work in May 1996 from Hunter College School of Social Work, and her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology in 1992 from State University of New York/College of Old Westbury.

Prior to The Children's Aid Society, she worked in the field of HIV/AIDS Prevention as a case manager for an SRO (Single Room Occupancy) facility. She provided recreational and therapeutic services to the geriatric and HIV/AIDS populations. She served on a two person team as a Community Liaison. She recruited uninsured children for health insurance titled Child Health Plus and also organized health fairs for several communities.

Marta worked for 10 years for the Tremont Community Council in various positions such as Summer Camp Director, Youth Development Counselor and AIDS Prevention and Outreach Coordinator.

MARK A. FORGET

Dr. Mark A. Forget is President and Director of Staff Development at ***MAX Teaching with Reading and Writing***, a staff-development firm that helps schools improve student learning

through the use of communication skills in the learning process. He is the former Director of Staff Development in Middle Grades and High School Reading at the **Southern Regional Education Board** in Atlanta. A 25-year career in teaching at the high school, middle school, and elementary levels in the subjects of social studies, science, mathematics, health/physical education, and reading, prepared him as a teacher who used reading and writing to help students learn subject matter while improving their abilities to learn. He has been an adjunct professor in content area reading at Old Dominion University for ten years, has co-authored the textbook *Reading for Success: A School to Work Approach* (1996), and has written many other published works on reading, skills instruction, and brain-compatible learning. He was the teacher/director of a ninth-grade content-area-reading program called "The Model School" in Virginia Beach, VA. He speaks English, French, and Spanish, is married, has four sons, and lives in Atlanta and Virginia Beach.

PATRICIA BREKKE

Patricia Barrera Brekke was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. Patty was educated through the parochial system in Chicago and received her B.A. from Mundelein College. She has an M.A. in both Reading and Bilingual Education and is seeking an administrative certificate.

Patty was an elementary school teacher with the Chicago Archdiocese for six years and in 1990 became a primary bilingual teacher with the Chicago Public Schools. In 1993, she joined the staff at the Cesar E. Chavez Multicultural Academic Center as the Bilingual Lead Teacher. In 1996, Patty and Sandy wrote a Title VII Comprehensive School Improvement Grant and received the five year $1.3 million grant.

In addition to her duties as the Bilingual Lead Teacher, Patty is now the acting-head teacher of the Second Chance Alternative High School. This is an evening alternative school for young men and women who have dropped-out, were put-out, or can not attend school due to their gang affiliation.. This is an exciting project targeting a group of the most at-risk students.

Patty has a husband, Chris, who teaches math at Chavez. Patty and Chris have three children, Max (8), Madelyn (6), and Liam (4).

SANDRA TRABACK

Sandra Traback received her BS at the University of Michigan, her MS at Chicago State University, and is currently thinking about finishing her dissertation at the University of Illinois. Sandy has a 17 year old daughter, Santina.

Sandy has been an employee of the Chicago Public Schools for thirty years. She was a teacher for eighteen years, became and administrator, and finally Principal of the Cesar E. Chavez Multicultural Academic Center in 1993. The Chavez was built to relieve overcrowding at a neighborhood school. The Chavez opened overcrowded. The Chavez serves 965 students in two buildings on a year-round multi-track schedule.

The Chavez is located in the Back of the Yards in Chicago. 58% of the students are ELL, 92% of the students have a language other than English spoken in the home. 99.3% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Since 1996, the number of students at or above grade level had doubled.

The Chavez has been recognized by the Hispanic Magazine as one of five outstanding US schools in 1998. Chavez has been recognized in a benchmark study commissioned by OBEMLA for school improvement. IPAR and the Center for Applied Linguistics conducted the study. Chavez was showcased at the ISIA Regional Conference in Denver, Colorado in 1999. Sandy received the 1999 Chicago Outstanding Principal Award.

JOANNE CASHMAN

Joanne Cashman is the Director of The Policymaker Partnership (PMP) For Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Partnership is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs and operates within the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. With 11 Primary Partners, 8 Supporting Partners, and 22 Linking Partners, PMP can provide technical assistance and dissemination on a range of issues related to IDEA implementation. Before joining the PMP, Joanne directed The Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program at The George Washington University. She continues to teach courses in Special Education Policy and Interagency Service Coordination. Prior to coming to George Washington University, Joanne was concurrently the Principal of the Oaklyn Elementary School and Supervisor of Special Education for the Shikellamy School District in Sunbury, Pennsylvania. Joanne has worked extensively with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Department of Labor. Her research includes: Shared Policy Agendas and Crosscutting Policy Strategies; Implementation of the School-to-Career Movement; Service Learning and Self-Determination; and Self-Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities.

SUSAN AGRUSO

Susan A. Agruso is the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Accountability in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District (CMS) in North Carolina. Her responsibilities consist of the administration of all district and state assessments, analysis of data, and grant applications and reports. She is co-author of a text on assessment development and has served on numerous state and national committees.

Prior to joining CMS, Dr. Agruso was the State Director of Assessment in South Carolina where she coordinated the development of the State's new standards-based assessment system, the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT).

Dr. Agruso has experience as a Science Specialist for the New York Department of Education and was a high school Physics Teacher in East Islip, New York for eleven years. She was recognized with a State Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching and was one of two teachers from New York selected for the Teacher in Space Program. She holds a Ph.D. in instructional Psychology, Master's in Education, and Bachelor's in Physics.

THOMAS PETERSON

Thomas H. Peterson is the Associate Commissioner in the office of Leadership and School Improvement in the Kentucky Department of Education. His accomplishments include the following: drafted the regulatory language for the scholastic audit process as mandated in KRS 158.6455 Assistance to Schools, Guidelines for Audit; drafted the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement, A Kentucky Model for Whole School Improvement and support

documents; communicated the connection of the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement and the regulatory process to whole school improvement to stakeholders across the Commonwealth; responsible for oversight and facilitation of the scholastic audit process for the interim accountability cycle; organized the work of the Office of Leadership and School Improvement to serve schools and districts in their efforts to achieve proficiency for all students; responsible for the design and delivery of the annual training for professional development coordinators throughout the Commonwealth; designed and marketed the Principals of Excellence Network; responsible for design and delivery of the statewide data conference; responsible for oversight of numerous programs focused on assisting schools and districts which include scholastic audit, high school restructuring, Kentucky Leadership Academy, highly skilled educators, evaluation of certified personnel, professional development, school improvement, principal academy, consolidated planning, site-based councils, effective instructional leadership act, superintendents training and testing, commonwealth institute for teachers, and commonwealth school improvement funds.

JANE QUINN

Jane Quinn joined the Children's Aid Society as Assistant Executive Director for Community Schools in January 2000. In this capacity, she leads and oversees local and national work to forge effective long-term partnerships between public schools and other community resources, using the nine CAS community schools in New York City as both a model and a base for national adaptation.

Ms. Quinn came to CAS from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, where she served as Program Director from January 1993 to November 1999. This national foundation's sole focus is the education and career development of young people, especially those growing up in low-income communities. Prior to that she directed a national study of youth organizations for the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which resulted in the publication of a book entitled *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours.*

Quinn served from 1981 to 1990 as director of program services for Girls Clubs of America, a national organization based in New York. In prior years, she held positions in Washington, D.C., at the D.C. Health Department and the Center for Population Options. In addition, she was a caseworker for the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago, and Family Counseling Center, Catholic Charities of Buffalo, N.Y.

Quinn received a master's degree from the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration and a bachelor's degree in economics from the College of New Rochelle. She did post-graduate work in non-profit management at the Columbia School of Business (Institute for Not-for-Profit Management).

M. SUSAN BURNS

M. Susan Burns is currently a faculty member at George Mason University. She held faculty appointments at Tulane University and the University of Pittsburgh. At the National Research Council, she was study director for the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children. Her research interests include instructional practices that facilitate early language and literacy development, assessment of young children, early childhood curriculum, and parent-child interaction. Applied interests include the development of intervention/ prevention strategies for children living in poverty, those who have a home language other than

English, and children with disabilities. She has a PhD in applied developmental psychology from Peabody College, Vanderbilt University.

ANTONIO A. FIERRO

Antonio A. Fierro was born in El Paso, TX and graduated with a B.B.A from University of Texas, El Paso. In the private sector, Mr. Fierro worked with Frito-Lay Inc. and Southland Corporation and later went into the public sector working as a federal officer with the Department of Justice. Mr. Fierro returned to college and received his Master's Degree with specializations in Gifted and Talented Education, Bilingual Education, and Early Childhood Education. In 1997, Mr. Fierro was named as the Texas State Teacher of the Year and went on to represent the state in the National Teacher of the Year competition.

Currently, Mr. Fierro is employed with the Region 19 Education Service Center and is responsible for assisting area school districts in the area of reading. Mr. Fierro has returned to UT El Paso and is working on his doctorate. His dissertation will focus on the Texas Reading Initiative and its impact on reading achievement.

Mr. Fierro and his wife, Rosa Isela, have an 11 month-old son.

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